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The relations between secondary vocational wildlife management training and the labour market in the dual education system

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Abstract: Hungary has a long history of training professional hunters and the quality of wildlife management is world-renowned. In my work, I used databases of professional organisations and questionnaire surveys to investigate the factors determining the training of professional hunters at the secondary level and the labour market conditions. Comparing the training conditions of neighbouring countries and Germany, it is clear that the training of professional hunters takes place in the highest number of institutions, with the longest, 5-year training period in Hungary. In the previous decades, Hungary has seen an increase in the number of training institutions, which has clearly led to an overeducation compared to the number of workplaces. The age distribution of active professional hunters shows that graduated professionals do not appear in the labour market. This is mainly due to the poor financial and moral standing of professionals. The feedback from those exercising the hunting rights is that it is difficult to find suitable professionals, while they are open to providing internships and participating in vocational training. The intention of employers and employees, the framework curriculum introduced in 2020, and the government's Vocational Training 4.0 strategy open up a new dimension in quality, dual secondary vocational training in wildlife management.

Keywords: vocational training; dual training; professional hunters; unique education; overeducation; hunter training abroad

1. Introduction

Hungary's wildlife management is world-famous. In the first half of the 20th century, Hungary's wildlife management was still known mainly for its huge small game harvest. The most famous small game hunting areas were Tótmegyer and Pusztaszer. Due to the artificial transformation of habitats, the predominance of big game species was observed. Our country undisputedly has a prominent place in the world ranking of the C.I.C. trophy (C.I.C., 2023). In the case of red deer, five of the top ten world record specimens were bagged in Hungary. For fallow deer, the

proportion is the same. The two highest-scoring fallow bucks in the world were bagged in the Gúth forestry area. Of the five strongest roebucks in the world ranking, 3 are Hungarian. The world record for tuskers is also held by a Hungarian specimen (C.I.C. 2023). The diverse Hungarian habitats, combined with the excellent genetics of the Hungarian wildlife population, are of unique value. Its maintenance and protection can only be ensured by trained professionals, and therefore their quality education must be a priority task of agricultural policy.

An analysis of the sector's financial data over the last ten years shows that revenues have slightly exceeded expenditure (Fig. 1.). The profit for the sector varied between €2 million and €11 million between 2011 and 2021. The largest share of revenues is generated by domestic and foreign hired hunting and its services and by revenues from the shot game (OVA, 2011-2021). The economic result of hired hunting is linked to vocational training and practice, as professional hunters are the ones who, through professionally based planning, habitat development, and game protection, raise the game that they will be able to bag with hunting guests in even more than ten years. Revenues from domestic and foreign hired hunting account for 38 per cent of total revenues over 10 years on average. The salary costs of almost 3,000 professional hunters account for 27 per cent of expenditure.

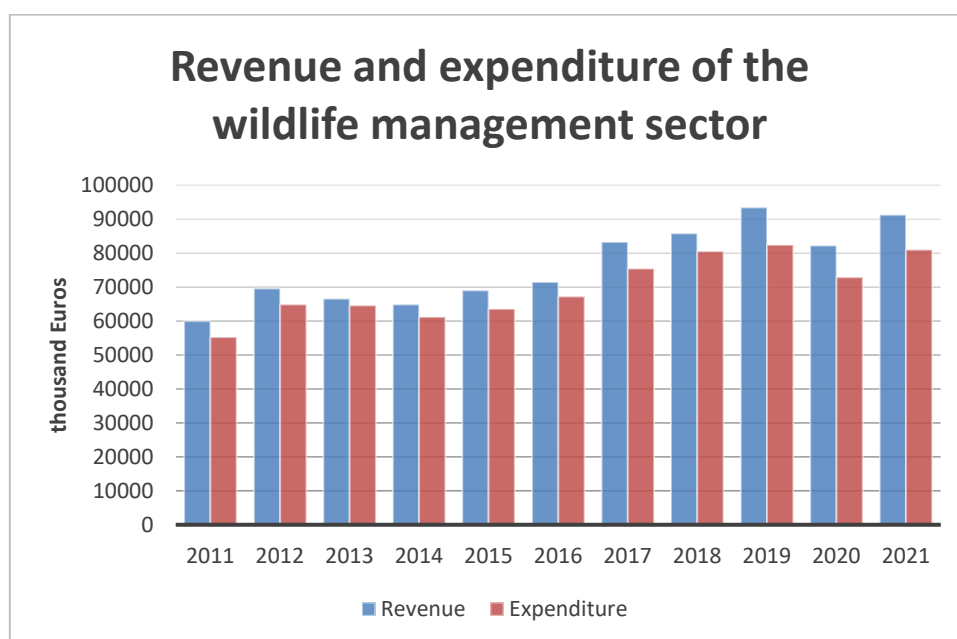


Fig. 1. Revenue and expenditure of the wildlife management sector between 2011- 2021
In Euro (National Game Management Database (OVA))

Quality wildlife management is based on the high-quality training of professionals. Only dedicated professionals with the appropriate theoretical and practical knowledge can ensure the future of the sector. Their training, education, and professional appreciation is a strategic issue.

The internationally recognized achievements of the wildlife management sector undeniably depend on expertise, which is in line with the fact that the development of hunting professionals in Hungary dates back to the Middle Ages. Forestry and hunting professionals were trained in parallel and common institutions with a close connection between the forest and the big game. Both professions were included in the first real vocational school established in 1806, known as the "Forest and Hunting School". Later on, hunting studies were constantly present and strengthened from decade to decade in the training of forest guards. Ten years after the establishment of the first secondary forestry school, in 1893, the training of professional hunters was separated by organizing courses for gamekeepers.

As an instructor of Hungary's oldest secondary school for training professional hunters and as a member of the Expert Committee for Education of the Hungarian Hunters' National Chamber, I consider that maintaining the quality of education and adapting it to the 21st-century requirements are my most important tasks. To this end, my research has focused on the most important characteristics, interrelations, and problems of vocational training in wildlife management and the labour market. The following questions arose:

- What impact the framework curricula of the last 10 years have had on the professional content of secondary wildlife management education, and how they have influenced the possibility of deepening professional knowledge and finding a job in the profession?
- Can those exercising hunting rights, as employers find professionals of suitable quality and quantity?
- Could professional hunters and those exercising hunting rights, as employers be involved in practical training?

For the competitiveness of the sector, it is also essential to have an overview of the main characteristics of the training of professionals in competing countries in the hunting market, and the study, therefore, focuses on secondary wildlife management education in neighbouring countries and Germany.

2. Sources and method

- 1) Through source analysis I will present the most important points in the development of gamekeeper training in Hungary.
- 2) In order to explore the specificities of gamekeeper training outside Hungary and to assess our domestic training in an international context, I sent a questionnaire to the hunting

associations of neighbouring countries (Austria, Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia) and Germany.

3) I identified institutions providing training in forestry and wildlife management based on the database of the Herman Otto Institute (HOI), the national body responsible for professional examinations. Based on the number of worksheets requested, I determined the number of professionals who applied for the examination between 2015 and 2023.

4) With the help of the Ministry of Agriculture (AM), I conducted a 35-question survey among those exercising hunting rights, as employers. The questions covered several areas. These included an assessment of the labour market situation, the employer's professional expectations towards the professional hunter, and the possibility of involving those exercising hunting rights in the vocational training. I used a multiple-choice option and a five-point Likert scale for the responses.

5) I determined the age of gamekeepers based on the data on active professional hunters kept by the Hungarian Hunters' National Chamber (OMVK). I conducted a survey of 42 questions among active professionals. The primary aim of this survey was to examine the extent to which professional hunters are satisfied with the training provided by their former institution, with particular emphasis on practical training. In addition, I examined to what extent and under what conditions professionals could be involved in vocational secondary education.

6) As a member of the OMVK Expert Committee for Education, I was able to use the TÁRKI survey carried out by the Hungarian Hunters' National Chamber in 2006, to which 37% of active professional hunters responded.

7) In order to examine the situation in vocational training institutions, I carried out a questionnaire survey among teachers and principals working in sectoral education. I received replies from 22 teachers and 8 principals of ten institutions, including the eight with the longest history. In this study, I used the results regarding the ratio of employment and further education. In addition, I also got an idea of what, according to colleagues, are the main reasons why professionals in the profession leave their careers.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. The formation of vocational wildlife management training in Hungary

Hunting is clearly one of the oldest human activities. In the society of hunters, education for the next generation has always been of great importance. This responsible task is passed from generation to generation. In addition to hunting, our nature-related predecessors had already realized the importance of protecting and caring for wildlife already in the Middle Ages. At the same time, written references to the work of hunting professionals are found in contemporary sources, the earliest from the 13th century. The hunter ispán or count, who was responsible for the management of hunters, played an important role in the social order, and the inhabitants of villages engaged in hunting received great privileges from our kings (Kőhalmy, 2003).

From 1729, hunting appeared as a branch and the need for school-based vocational training evolved during this period in the field of forestry and hunting (Act XXII of 1729). In the 19th century the "Forest and Hunting School", founded by Count György Festetich and operating with the Georgicon in Keszthely from 1806 to 1848, began to teach both professions. In parallel with the forest guard training, having greater importance from the point of view of the economy, the teaching of hunting-related skills was constantly present. The separation of the two professions can be dated from 1893. From this point, the professional hunters had to take a separate exam and candidates made an oath (Kollwenz, 1995).

In the middle of the 19th century, the profession prioritized the importance of professional training. Compared to the situation nowadays, there had been more intensive public communication on how to train the best quality professional staff, as these articles were published monthly in the Forestry Pages (Erdészeti Lapok) on the importance of vocational training. As early as 1863, Antal Hideghéthy outlined a school image in seven points that would be truly valid in the dual system of nowadays (Hideghéthy, 1863).

In the school system in today's sense, the training of professional hunters started in Hungary in 1959 in the area of the State Farm of Balatonnagyberki but in 1966, due to poor training conditions, secondary vocational training in wildlife management was moved to its real place and opened its doors in Szombathely (Bögöti, 2018).

In the following decades, several other institutions also started to offer secondary vocational training in wildlife management. In 1964 Dr. István Bertóti, the eminent professional in Hungary's wildlife management, on October 4th during the National Association of Hungarian

Hunters' (MAVOSZ) board meeting declared that none of the Western and socialist countries have such a versatile and multi-faceted professional hunter training than in Hungary. "In terms of training professional hunters, we take a prominent place, we have separate schools, and we train professional hunters." (Gál, 1964, p. 5.).

3.2. Training of professional hunters in neighbouring countries

Hunting culture has different traditions in many countries on our continent. Hungary's hunting customs and professional approach have developed in close interaction with the traditions of the German, Austrian, and Slovakian regions. In my research, I tried to get to know the practice of professional hunter education abroad, mainly in the German-speaking areas. In addition, I investigated the frameworks in which professional hunter education, with a special focus on secondary vocational training in wildlife management, is implemented in the Carpathian Basin in different countries. For my work, I contacted hunting associations, hunting chambers, and actively working wildlife professionals in each country (Beer; Németh; Pál; Schachenhoffer; Tósaki; Wolff, 2020). I prepared a twelve-point questionnaire, the logic of which helped to reveal the fundamental differences.

Table 1 clearly shows the differences in the training and employment of professional hunters. Only Hungary has five years of training for professional hunters in the form of a secondary technical school. In the German-speaking areas (Austria, Germany), professionals trained for the profession of gamekeeper are trained in a three-year dual training system. Also in these two countries and in Hungary, there is a separation between professional hunter and forester training at the secondary level. At the moment there are 16 different vocational schools offering professional hunter training in Hungary compared to 2-2 respectively in Germany and Austria. In Germany with its quadruple land size only 20 students graduate each year in this field.

Table 1. The characteristics of the training and employment of professional hunters in some priority countries

	Hungary	Germany	Austria	Slovakia	Romania	Serbia	Slovenia
Requirements of employing a professional hunter	Required, for each 4000 hectares	Not required, only on national hunting grounds	Not required, only over 2500 hectares	Not required, they have volunteer professional hunters	Required, one for every hunting club	Required, one for every hunting club	Required, on the 12 national hunting grounds and after every 2000 hectares
Minimum qualification requirements	5-year vocational school	3-year school training	3-year school training	A few day-long training	No requirements	No requirements	Gamekeeper training
Size of the country (km ²)	93 030	357 340	83 871	49 035	238 397	88 361	20 271
Size of the hunting grounds (ha)	6500	895	115	2365	11050	5400	4500
Number of those exercising hunting rights	1440 ¹	40 000	12 500	1880	2133	227 ²	420 ³
Number of professional hunters	2990	1000	550	No data available	2700	1800	100
Separate vocational-level training for professional hunters and foresters	Yes	Yes	Yes	Only forester vocational school and professional hunter training	Only forester vocational school and hunter training	Forester and responsible professional hunter training, anyone can be a professional hunter	Only forester vocational school and gamekeeper training
Number of schools offering vocational training for professional hunters	16	2	2	0 (only forester schools)	0 (only forester schools)	0 (one school for responsible professional hunters)	0
Number of professional hunter graduates each year	Varied 2018–19: 92. it will increase.	20	15–20				

¹ OVA, 2020² associations and many hunting clubs within those³ nonprofessional gamekeepers

3.3. The age distribution and educational level of the active gamekeepers in Hungary

Regarding the outcome of vocational training, I examined the proportion of new entrants entering the labour market. Based on a comparison of the 2006 TÁRKI survey commissioned by the Hungarian Hunters' National Chamber (OMVK) and the 2019 database of the OMVK, the number of young people working in the profession has clearly decreased among the professional hunters, while the proportion of older active colleagues has increased significantly. In 2006, more than a third of professional hunters participated in the study. In the sample (n=1103), the proportion of people between the ages of 20 and 29 was 19 per cent, and the proportion of people over 60 was 2.9 per cent. According to the OMVK database (n=2991), the proportion of young and old people has been reversed by 2019. The proportion of those under the age of 29 decreased to 8 per cent, while the proportion of those over 60 increased to 21.1 per cent (Fig. 2.). Thus, the importance of the education of young professionals and vocational training is clearly increasing.

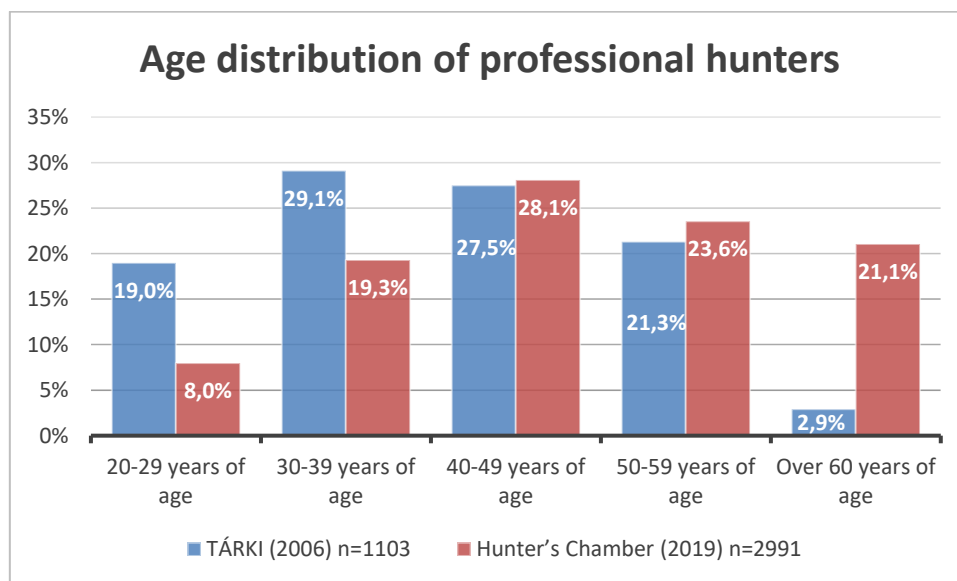


Fig. 2. Percentage distribution of ages according to the 2019 database of the Hunter's Chamber and the 2006 TÁRKI survey

The responses of the professional hunters (n=298) who participated in my survey in 2019 show that 25.8% of them have a higher education qualification and 74.2% have a secondary education qualification. Among secondary education qualifications, 19.2% have a forestry technician qualification, 12.1% have a forestry and wildlife management technician qualification, and 68.7% have a wildlife management technician qualification. It can therefore be concluded that

the majority of the active professional hunters in the sample have graduated from a secondary school of wildlife management (Fig. 3.).

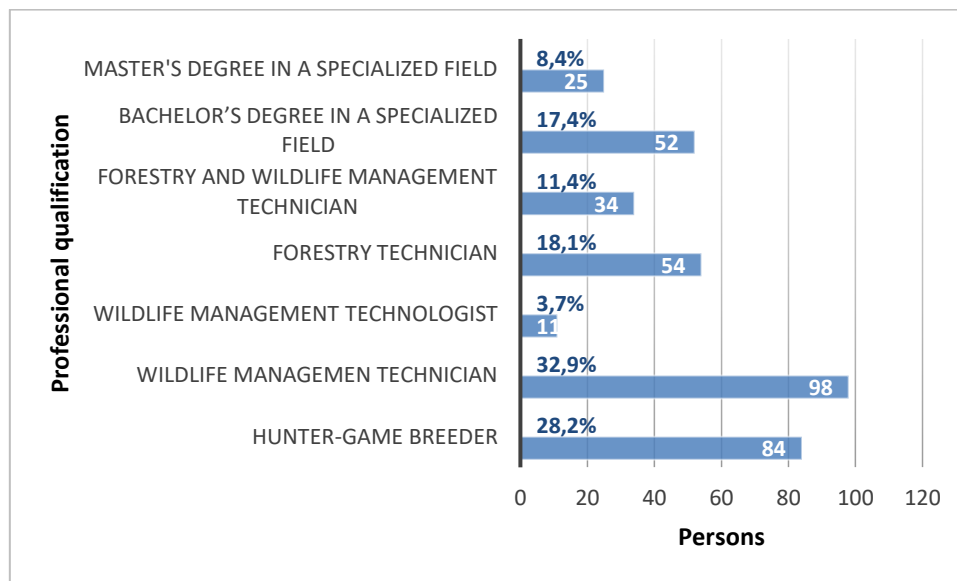


Fig. 3. Professional qualifications of responding professional hunters (n=298) in 2019

3.4. Study of the relationship between framework curricula and dual training

The quality of secondary vocational training in wildlife management is fundamentally determined by the central framework curricula and its legal framework. Between 2006 and 2020, five different curricula were used to train professional hunters. Between 2013 and 2020 this represented 4 changes and marked a drift in the sectoral vocational training. In a study I started in 2019, I researched what proportion of employers, active professionals, and teacher colleagues with decades of experience working in vocational training were involved in the development of individual expectations. Four of the 173 employers who responded, three of the 298 professional hunters, and three of the 22 teachers who responded, working in 10 schools, were consulted in the development of a central framework curriculum (Bögöti, 2019). I conducted a document analysis to study the number of hours each framework curriculum provides for the teaching of professional content (Fig. 4.).

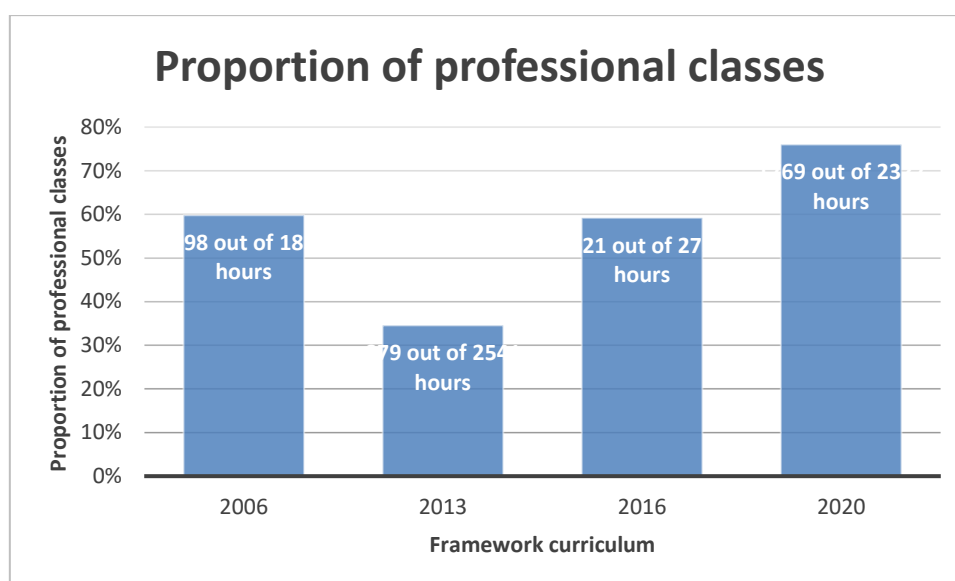


Fig. 4. Professional classes related to wildlife management and their proportion in the framework curricula between 2006-2020

A framework curriculum was also published in 2018, but its number of professional classes was the same as in 2016. Based on the document analysis, I have clearly shown that the framework curriculum in force from 2020 onwards, based on the curricula issued between 2006 and 2020, provides the highest number and proportion of classes for subjects related to wildlife management. Another advantage is that each institution can decide on the proportion of theory and practice within each subject. This clearly facilitates the implementation of dual training. The dual partners can train not only during the summer internships but also during the school year, as it is possible to freely vary the number of practical classes and organize full-day internships in a given subject area.

In 2013, the merging of forestry and wildlife management training had a clear negative impact on the teaching of forestry and wildlife management-related subjects. An examination of the training curricula showed that the merger of the two professions had a negative impact on the professional content, as the same amount of time was available for teaching the two professions together as for teaching one profession.

3.5. Number of professionals who graduated

According to Act LV of 1996, those exercising hunting rights are obliged to employ one professional hunter for every 4,000 ha started. The professional hunter position can be held by a forestry technician or a wildlife management technician with secondary education. From the Herman Otto Institute (HOI) dataset, I was able to track the institutions' written exam

applications from 2015, thus determining the number of students who have graduated. According to this data, the number of candidates for the exam has developed as follows over the last nine years (Fig. 5.).

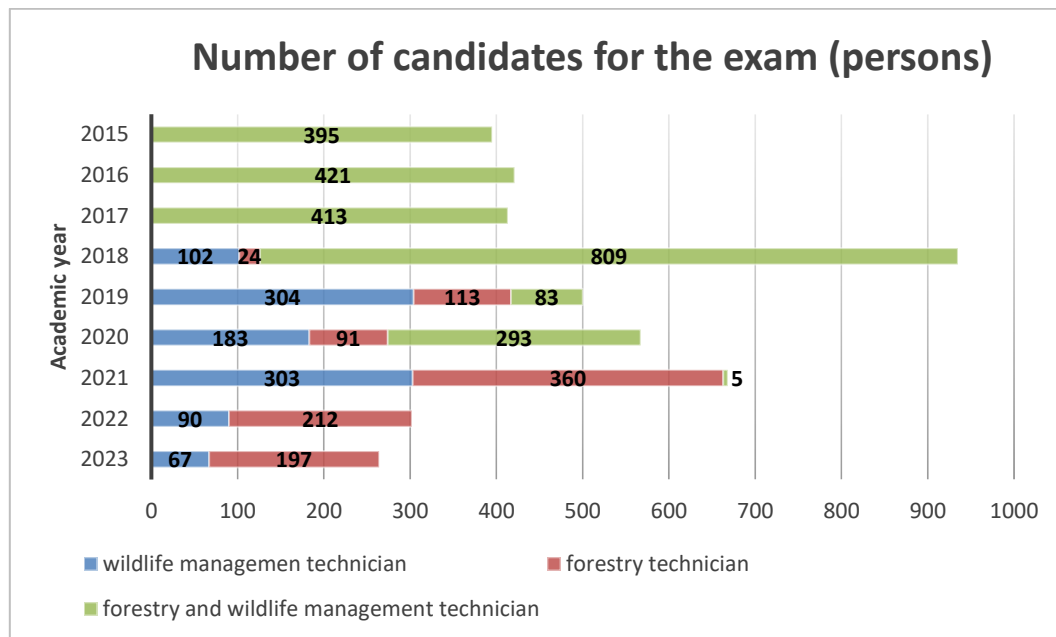


Fig. 5. Number of candidates for the exam by profession between 2015 and 2023

Based on the online register of the Innovative Training Support Centre (IKK) (31 August 2020) In 12 counties of Hungary, 16 places were open for enrolment in the listed professions. In terms of the number of institutions teaching the listed professions, the 2019/20 academic year was the most prominent. In the 9 years under study, a total of 2,640 forestry and wildlife technicians, 997 forestry technicians, and 828 wildlife technicians applied for the vocational examinations. The merger of the two professions was very successful among the candidates. This popularity was exploited by the institutions. Some of these schools had no history of training, no teaching staff, and no material conditions for teaching. In 2018, a total of 809 forestry and wildlife technicians applied for the professional exams.

3.6. Employment, further education

In 2019, I asked the heads of the eight institutions with the longest training histories to provide me with data on the further education and employment of their graduates. As the schools have a career tracking system, the principals and form master colleagues can provide the most accurate data in this regard. Across eight schools, the average rate of continuing studies in higher education ranged from 5 to 30 per cent. On average, 12.25 per cent of graduates continue their studies in higher education. According to the principals of five traditional forestry schools,

43% of graduates are now foresters. Data from six schools, including the two oldest institutions training professional hunters, show that 19.16 per cent of graduates are now professional hunters.

In terms of the number of graduates, the proportion of graduates taking up further education and career starters is very low. Meanwhile, the wildlife management sector reports a shortage of staff. Only verbal information on the number of unfilled professional hunter posts is available from the government agencies registering professional hunters. The reason for this is that without a professional hunter, the hunting rights of those exercising these rights would have to be suspended, which is not currently the case. According to verbal information, there are currently hundreds of professional hunter posts unfilled in Hungary, despite an impressive overeducation.

Articles on the shortage of professionals also appear regularly in the two leading professional journals. Tibor Farkas, one of our country's renowned practitioners, put his experiences at the national level on paper in the pages of *Vadászlap*. He considers it sad that when Hungary hosts the jubilee World Hunting Exhibition in recognition of the sector's achievements, it cannot solve the personnel issues related to wildlife management. According to the author, there is a mismatch between labour supply and demand. "It is becoming increasingly difficult to find able, good professional hunters. Someone who can take the management of the hunting ground on his shoulders." (Farkas, 2019). In December 2020, Vilmos Fodermayer, professional hunter vice-president of the OMVK, wrote the followings in an article published in the columns of *Nimród*: "Based on feedback from those exercising the hunting rights, it has become increasingly difficult to find professional hunters for vacant positions in recent years; it is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that there is a shortage of professionals nationwide." (Fodermayer, 2020). In my study in 2019, the main reason for leaving the profession was low wages, according to employers, professional hunters, and specialized teacher colleagues. Professional hunters also highlighted the treatment by management, the denial of privileges, and the lack of a sense of vocation (Fig. 6.).

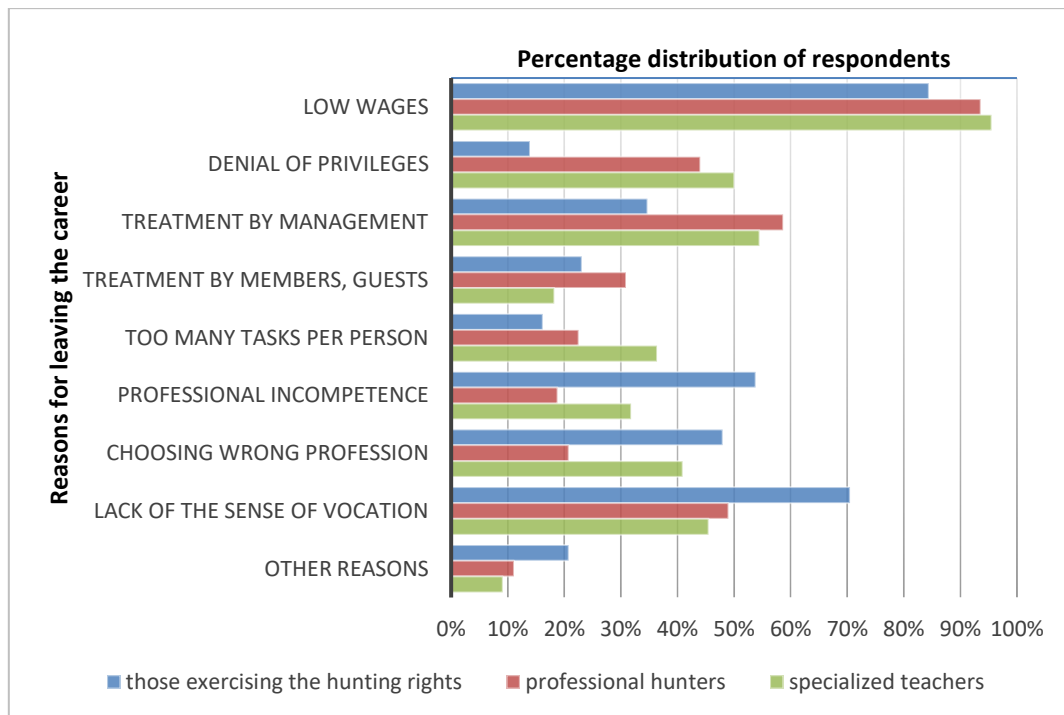


Fig. 6. Percentage distribution of the main reasons for leaving the hunting profession, according to the opinions of those exercising hunting rights, professional hunters, and specialized teachers in 2019

This is confirmed by the results published by the Hungarian Hunters' National Chamber in March 2023. 48% of active professional hunters answered the questions of the representative body. The gross salary of 31.7 per cent of the respondents is between 663-793 Euros. A further 36.63% of respondents have a gross salary of less than this. In 2022, the average gross salary in Hungary was €1,326, according to the data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH). This means that more than 68% of professional hunters will receive up to half of the average salary in Hungary. 52.6% of respondents feel that their work is not valued morally. A quarter of professional hunters, participating in the study, plan to leave the profession. (Berger and Agyaki, 2023). Since 2022, the Hungarian Hunters' National Chamber website has published the recommended wage grid for professional hunters. According to this, the recommended starting salary is 854 Euro gross with secondary education qualification (OMVK, 2023).

3.7. The opportunities offered by dual vocational training

I have adapted the training system outlined in the Vocational Training 4.0 document, issued by the Hungarian government (Government decision no. 1168/2019. (III.28.)), to the sector and created a model of dual secondary vocational training in wildlife management. From the point of view of vocational education, the most significant and forward-looking change compared to

the way the institutions have been operating so far is the inclusion of those exercising hunting rights as dual partners and professional hunters as instructors in the system. The other elements of the system were already part of the training. (Fig. 7.)

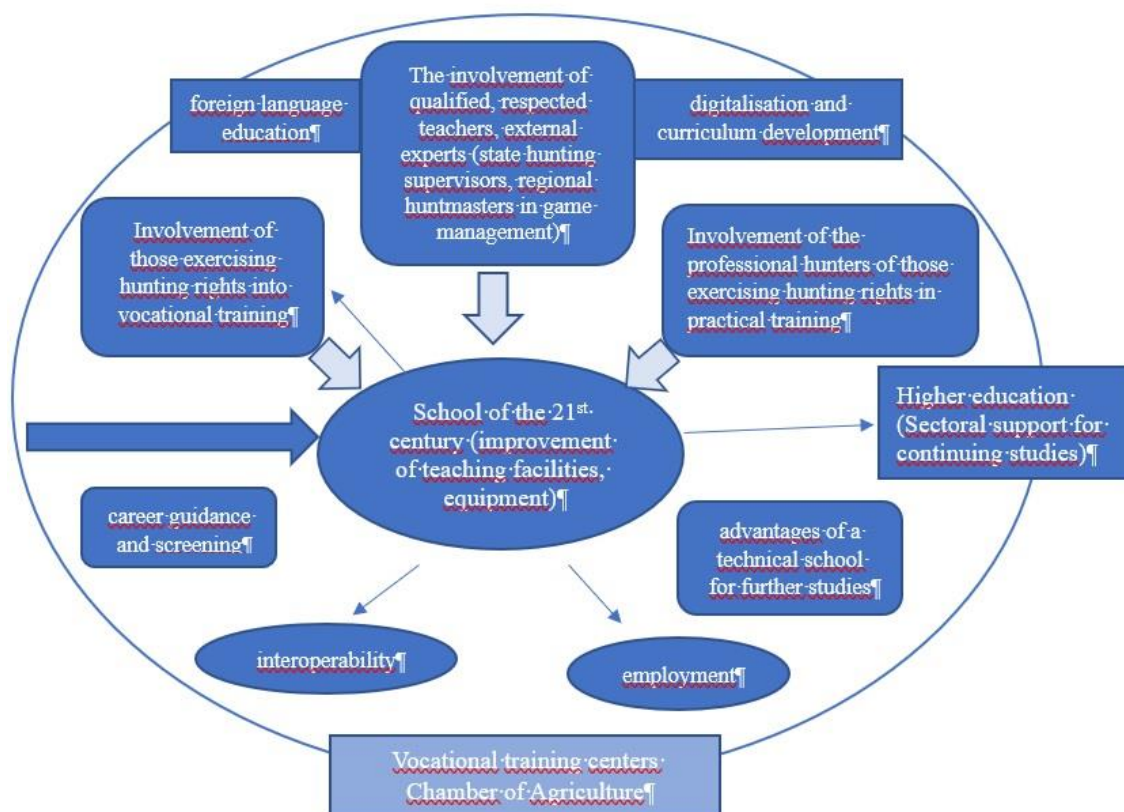


Fig. 7. The model of secondary vocational training in wildlife management in dual training

This academic year, students enrolled in 2021-2022 will be the first to experience the dual vocational training system in the field of practical training. They must complete their compulsory four-week summer internship between 3 July and 31 August.

Before the introduction of dual training, I used a questionnaire to survey employers and active professional hunters on their views on practical training in the hunting ground. I used a 5-point Likert scale for the answers to each question.

Almost two-thirds (69.4%) of the responding employers, as potential dual partners, would consider it an excellent idea and according to one-third, it is a good idea for the students of professional hunter training to complete their professional internships in hunting grounds with different characteristics. At the same time, 85% of those exercising hunting rights would fully support that the students learn theory in school and practice exclusively on the hunting grounds with active gamekeepers. The questionnaires show that 71.1% of the respondents exercising

hunting rights have not been involved at all, and 12.1% have only been involved in teaching students at a secondary vocational institution during summer internships. According to employers, a quarter (28.28%) of the vocational skills can be demonstrated in the context of summer internships. Practical work in the hunting ground throughout the year would therefore be necessary.

89.6% of those exercising hunting rights have not yet received an invitation from an educational institution to participate in the practical training of students in wildlife management, although 69.4% of respondents would like to participate in vocational training.

52% of employers believe that from the age of 16, students could effectively help the work of professional hunters. A fifth of those exercising hunting rights could employ students five days a week, nearly a third (28.9%) could employ them three days a week, and 35.3% two days a week.

A high proportion of those exercising hunting rights could provide accommodation (28.3%), daily hot meals (41%), and hunting opportunities (83.2%) for the students.

To summarize the results, I identified 93 parties exercising hunting rights in the sample as potential dual partners, all of whom would be willing to participate in the training of professional hunters even if the students had to be paid a salary. Of these, only seven said that they had been contacted formally by an educational institution to help with the practical training of professional hunters. Four of them had already worked with professional hunter students in summer internships.

Of the 93 priority parties exercising hunting rights, 30 exploit small game hunting grounds, 36 big game hunting grounds, and 27 in mixed game hunting grounds. This ratio is excellent for the demonstration and teaching of practical work. Three of them are state forestries, the rest are hunting associations.

Eighty-two employers (88.17%) of the potential dual partners believe that a gamekeeper student, from the age of 16 or even earlier, could help a professional hunter. The remaining parties exercising hunting rights would consider students from the age of 17 or 18 to be suitable for this task.

Looking at the responses of professional hunters as potential instructors, 67.5 per cent of the respondents have not yet been involved at all in the school-based education of professional hunter students. There were only two respondents in the sample who were involved in the training of gamekeeper students on a daily basis and three respondents who were involved on

a monthly basis. 63.4% of the surveyed gamekeeper colleagues would definitely like to be involved in the education of gamekeeper students. If there were a separate salary for this, this percentage would rise to 72.8%. In particular, 55% of respondents would also take a short pedagogical course to be able to teach. 74.5% of the active professional hunters surveyed support the idea that professional hunter students should spend their practical training in hunting grounds with different conditions. At the same time, 84.6% think it would be a good idea for students to learn theory in school and practice exclusively with active professional hunters.

The vast majority of the professional hunters who responded, 81 of them, said that a gamekeeper could work with 2 students at a time.

This means that there are 118 people in the sample ($n=298$) who would be willing to participate in the practical training of students preparing to become professional hunters without a salary, even after participating in a short pedagogical course. If two students are assigned to each of them, it can be stated that, based on an examination of 9.96% of the active professional hunter population, there are 118 active gamekeepers who could provide the practical training of at least 236 students preparing to become professional hunters.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Vocational training in wildlife management has a long history in Hungary. Secondary vocational training in wildlife management is unique in international comparison, in terms of the number of institutions offering the qualification, the duration of the training, and the high number of professional courses.

The age analysis of the active gamekeeper population clearly shows that the proportion of career starters and young professionals is decreasing, while the number of workers over 60 is increasing significantly. Therefore, ensuring the supply of new entrants is a priority for the future.

The drift in vocational training was indicated by the fact that the framework curriculum for the training of professional hunters was changed five times between 2006 and 2020 and four times between 2013 and 2020. These were drawn up with minimal consultation of active professionals and teacher colleagues working in the sector's education. In 2013, the merging of secondary wildlife management and forestry training clearly reduced the number and proportion of professional classes devoted to wildlife management. Studying both professions at the same time was very attractive for those wishing to continue their studies. Many secondary schools

have taken advantage of this. Between 2015 and 2023, a total of 2640 professionals applied for the exam who can hold the post of a professional hunter. Currently, there are less than 3,000 professional hunter positions in Hungary. In 2020, 16 institutions in 12 counties of Hungary trained forestry and wildlife technicians. According to data provided by the heads of the institutions, the rate of further education and employment as professional hunters is low. It can be seen that, in addition to the significant overeducation, the number of graduates who do not enter the labour market, do not continue their studies in higher education, and leave the profession is very high. The reasons for this, according to the unanimous opinion of employers, professional hunters, and professional trainers, can be traced back to a lack of financial appreciation. Moral appreciation is also predominant, while employers believe that there is a lack of a sense of vocation. More than half of professional hunters receive half or less than the average salary in Hungary. The framework curriculum, introduced in 2020, provides the highest number and proportion of classes of vocational content. This, combined with the opportunities offered by dual vocational training, should ensure high-quality vocational training in the future. In my research, I have shown that those exercising hunting rights and active professional hunters support that gamekeeper students learn alongside active professional hunters in hunting grounds with different characteristics.

The potential dual partners meet the requirements both in terms of their conditions and their willingness to pay wages. 93 parties exercising hunting rights, as employers and 118 professional hunters would like to participate in the practical training of gamekeeper students.

In order to reduce the drop-out rate of active professional hunters and trained wildlife management specialists, the financial and moral appreciation of professional staff must be improved. Students and their parents applying to secondary school should be given credible information not only about the educational conditions of the school but also about the employment opportunities and future prospects. An admission procedure should be developed in which the competencies required for the profession are assessed. The aim is to attract young people who are genuinely committed to the profession, interested in it, and physically fit for it. The real needs of the labour market must be assessed. Secondary wildlife management vocational training institutions should be rated on the basis of their training outcomes and teaching conditions. The aim should be to train small classes or groups of students, with theoretical training based on the most up-to-date literature and with practical training with the best dual partners.

The future of the wildlife management sector is represented by a small number of highly qualified professional hunters, whose motivational financial appreciation is adjusted to the level required in the real labour market, and trained according to the expectations of employers and the profession.

In the future, the awareness-raising work of individual organisations can play a major role in supplying new entrants. Together with some of my colleagues, we have launched the national youth programme "Get to know the hunters", for which we have also elaborated an educational manual. We also publish a hunting magazine for children with national distribution. The Hungarian Hunters' National Chamber regards this educational and awareness-raising activity as a priority project, the aim of which is to familiarise children of pre-school and primary school age with the essence, ethical background, and professionalism of hunting in an experiential way, under the care of qualified and reliable experts. A similar activity, but covering all professions, is carried out by the Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture, which organises career guidance days for primary school pupils. Our vocational training institute introduces 2-300 children a year to nature-related professions, including the career of professional hunters.

The programmes are a major contribution to raising a generation that accepts the importance of wildlife management and that has a high rate of interest in this activity, either as sport hunters or as professional hunters.

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