

Hungarian adventure



In the fall of 2008 I was lucky to become a part of EU Mobility 'Control and Coordination of Multi Agent Robot Systems' (C&C of MARS) program. As soon as I heard Professor Shahram Payandeh, SFU head of the program, announcing: "There is an opportunity to be a part of an exchange program conducting a research in the robotic systems area in Budapest, Hungary", I knew that this is my dream come true. I applied immediately and soon after was accepted.

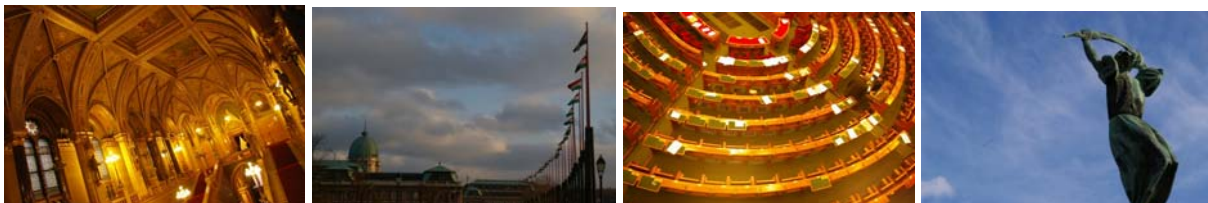


The project we were working on is very interesting and challenging. The participating universities are building teams of robots to play soccer (in Europe) and air hockey (in Canada), which involves finding both hardware and software solutions and implementing them in universities' laboratories.



My personal goal was designing the High Level Strategy of a robotic soccer game, implemented in Matlab environment. I was exposed to such remarkable concepts as fuzzy logic and neural networks, practiced my Matlab skills and found out many interesting things about the multi-agent systems.

In addition to work in the lab, we had to attend the Hungarian Culture course. It was taught by a very nice lady, Professor Gombos, who told us all about history, literature, music, food and other traditions of the Hungarian people. Also I joined my friends in the evening class of Hungarian Movies and never felt sorry for doing it. Both teachers are very intelligent and interesting people and they provided me with a great insight into the Hungarian culture.





Hungary is a very interesting country. Hungarian language belongs to the Finno-Ugric group (together with only Finnish) and is considered the second hardest language in the world, after Chinese. Hungary, and Budapest in particular, has a very long



history – Hungary is one of the oldest countries in Europe – which can be seen everywhere on the streets, in the villages, countless castles and churches. The city is full of monuments and statues of



different time periods. For decades (roughly from 1945 to 1989) Hungary was under the dictatorship regime of Communist Soviet Union, and still a lot of things remind of that period, not only the greatest concentration of communist time monuments in the Memento Park just outside Budapest, but also in



everyday life. When was the last time you saw a gas water-heater, for example? Or a Soviet-made Lada 2101?

However, the most impressive experience during the term abroad was meeting the people from all over the world. Being on the program, we were treated by the BME (Budapest University of Technology and Economics) as a part of ERASMUS movement (*European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students*), which practically means instantly gaining 250 friends from



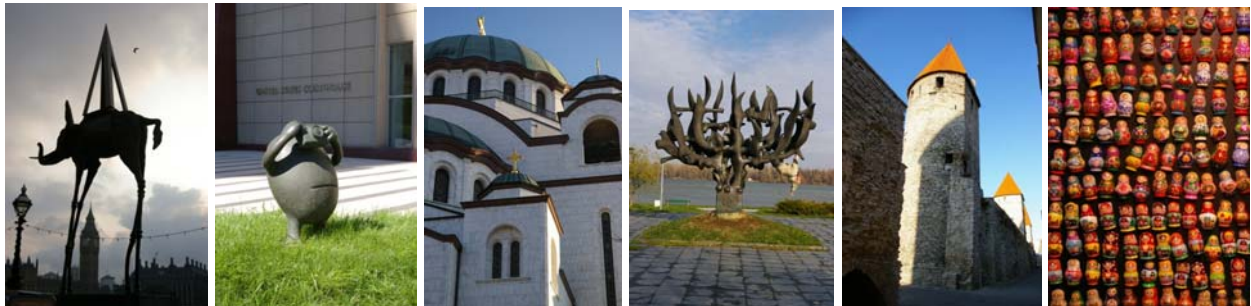
different countries with diverse backgrounds studying several different subjects, mostly architecture and engineering.



I lived in an old apartment house in the very center of Budapest with 4 other guys – Chinese-Canadian Winfield, Dutch Kasimir and two Spanish – Juanjo and Alejandro. It was quite an experience by itself: weekly international dinners; learning Spanish, Dutch and some Chinese and teaching English; movie nights, concerts, pubs and flat-parties - every evening was filled with action.



While in Budapest I attended countless concerts – Budapest is the hub of Central Europe and all the performers touring Europe have their shows there. Also the local scene is quite rich. Balkan and gypsy music sounds from every second pub you pass by, and there are hundreds in the city, where the heating was done with coal until recently and every building has a underground premise designated for coal storage in the past and used as a fun area nowadays.



Being for the first time in Europe, I couldn't resist the temptation to see as many surrounding countries as possible. Over the weekends I have visited the capitals of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Czech Republic and went on a bigger trip to Germany, Estonia and Finland. Either with 20 friends, or with just one - the trips were always fun and full of adventures. Relatively cheap and very broad train network provides great means to travel to the surrounding countries and a huge choice of Schengen cheap airlines enables one to travel anywhere in Europe with minimal expenses.



Areas around Budapest are also quite beautiful, I used the bicycle I got for the term to explore the shore of Danube, visit the towns of Vishegrad, Szentendre and several small villages. Budapest's thermal baths are very popular among the Hungarians and I can surely tell why now. Museums of electricity, transportation, crime, etc. serve as an interesting addition to countless but more traditional picture galleries, photography exhibitions, palaces and churches. A lot of information about the city and the country, current events, food and entertainment can be found in English.



I am really happy to have had this experience and I will be seeking for more opportunities abroad, because it's the best way to expand your horizons, make friends and acquire business connections around the world. With the current economy situation, exposure to the world might play the greatest role in personal development.



SZIASZTOK!

Anton Ayzikovsky