

FOREWORD

The relevance of autonomy for Central Europe is evident and this statement is equally true to other sub-regions of the continent. There are minority territorial autonomies flourishing and functioning properly in many regions of Europe, with one important exception. In Central Europe – where linguistic and ethnic richness is indisputable – the majority of states still oppose minority groups' claims for autonomy. The idea of autonomy, however, is based on the people's strong desire for freedom, inasmuch as the majority of people wish to minimize external influences over their lives. No doubt, in a society of the free, each of us can decide what is good or what is not, and to find the path to a worthy life.

The autonomy aspirations of Hungarian communities in the Carpathian Basin feature this desire for freedom as well, but without the threat of separatism. Autonomy would ensure freedom and democracy together with the possibility of preserving and developing a community whilst not threatening the freedom of others. Furthermore, such solutions benefit not only the lives of the individuals directly concerned, but by applying thoroughly considered and developed strategies, autonomy can favorably influence inter-state relations.

Creating a framework for autonomy and establishing autonomous territories serve two important cornerstones of the contemporary international order: the protection of human rights and the development of modern security policy. In addition, autonomy is an up to date and European tool for the protection of minorities. The more autonomy and minority rights a minority group has, the less likely it will resort to radical steps to achieve its goals and protect its interests.

The present volume is the collection of papers presented at the international conference entitled "Territorial Autonomies in Europe: Solutions and Challenges" organized by the Research Institute for Hungarian Communities Abroad in April 2013. The conference was organized on the 10-year anniversary of the adoption of the 9824 Report ("Gross Report") on the Positive experiences of autonomous regions as a source of inspiration for conflict resolution in Europe by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The report contributed to the better understanding and interpretation of autonomies as a form of minority protection that does not challenge the territorial integrity of states.

The papers published in this book discuss both the theoretical aspects of the issue of autonomy as well as the actual Western European solutions of autonomous arrangements. The plans, struggles, developments and eventual failures of some autonomy projects of the Hungarian communities in Slovakia, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine are also presented. A paper written by Károly Kocsis on the historical predecessors and current geographical possibilities of ethnic based territorial autonomies in the Carpathian Basin (formerly published in the *Hungarian Geopolitical Bulletin* 2013. Vol. 62. No 1.)

is also incorporated in the review since it clearly contextualizes minority Hungarian autonomy struggles. Finally, the Gross Report as well as the 1609 Recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe are also published in this review.

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