

AUTONOMY AMBITIONS IN SUBCARPATHIA

Subcarpathia and its ethnic composition

During the 20th century the region of *Subcarpathia* belonged to several different states: the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Czechoslovakia, the independent Carpatho-Ukraine, the Hungarian Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and finally to Ukraine. A century ago the administrative region known today as Subcarpathia did not exist either as a geographical, or as a geopolitical unit, and it has been known by various names. Today it is one of Ukraine's 24 counties (*oblast*'), which stretches over 12800 km² and includes 13 districts (*rayon*).

The official name of the administrative unit today is Transcarpathia (*Zakarpattya*), which reflects a geographical and/or political viewpoint as well, namely: viewed from Moscow and Kyiv, the region is situated beyond the Carpathian Mountains. At the same time the local population of the region refers to the territory as Subcarpathia (*Pidkarpattya*), because in their view it is situated at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains. Given that we deal with the topic of autonomy ambitions from the perspective of the local population, hereafter we'll use the term Subcarpathia.¹

Due to its very diverse historical past today several ethnicities and languages, religions and cultures live side by side here. Ukrainian/Rusyn, Hungarian and Romanian ethnic groups are the most significant in number. Rusyns constitute the largest minority in the county; however, their situation is quite controversial, since they have to fight for mere recognition, and in official statistics they are represented as Ukrainians. Rusyns have been living in the territory of the present-day Subcarpathia for several hundred years maintaining an identity distinct from Ukrainian. After 1945 the Soviet Union prohibited the usage of the ethnonym Rusyn and banned the Greek Catholic church, which played an important role in preserving the community's identity. The Soviet Authority explained the annexation of Subcarpathia to the Soviet Union as the "reunification" of the ancient Ukrainian lands, therefore the local Slavic inhabitants were declared Ukrainian, and their language a dialect of the Ukrainian language.² This

¹ The name used for the region is not unified in the international literature either. In the English language the terms *Subcarpathia* and *Transcarpathia* exist side by side.

² See: *Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Opinion on Ukraine.* Кримські студії, Інформаційний бюлетень 19-20 (1-2), 2003. 164.

view is shared by present-day Ukrainian politicians too: officially they do not recognise either the existence of the Rusyn ethnic group, or the Rusyn language.

According to the latest (2001) census Rusyn was declared as a nationality by only 10,090 people (about 1% of all Subcarpathian Ukrainians), of which 6,724 (66.6%) people also chose Rusyn as their native language (see *Table 1*).³ Nevertheless, the data cannot be taken as authoritative because in the census questionnaire Rusyn was not an option among nationalities.

The contradiction of the situation is well described by the fact that while Rusyn is not officially recognised as a minority in Ukraine, several Rusyn organisations are still registered lawfully, Rusyn language and culture are taught in Sunday schools, moreover Rusyn language appeared between minority languages under the scope of Ukraine's Law On Principles of the State Language Policy (commonly refers as Language Law)⁴ passed in 2012. Further on there are monuments, memorial plaques all across the territory of Subcarpathia dedicated to significant representatives of the Rusyn nation.

Rusyn ethnic and cultural organisations have turned to the government several times asking to recognise Rusyn as a separate nation and a separate language.⁵ The Organisation of Subcarpathian Rusyns (established in 1990) has claimed the recognition of Rusyns as a separate nationality and asked for autonomy to former Podcarpatska Rus on the example of Switzerland. On 1 May, 2007 the Subcarpathian County Council adopted the Rusyn nation as a separate nation but only within the territory of Subcarpathia, however autonomy ambitions were rejected. Certain researchers consider the Rusyn movement politically grounded⁶ and equalize their ambitions with separatism, which endanger the state integrity.⁷

³ Kuzio, T.: The Rusyn question in Ukraine: Sorting out fact from fiction. *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 2005. 32: 1–15.

⁴ The official Ukrainian text of the Law is available at: <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5029-17> (04.04.2013). Not official English, Russian and Hungarian translations available at: <http://www.r-u.org.ua/arhiv/akt/2078-news.html> (04.04.2013).

⁵ The fact that in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Croatia, as well as the United States and Canada recognises Rusyn as a separate nation and language proves that the recognition of Rusyns as a national minority and the question of the independent Rusyn language are not matters of scholarly or legal declaration, but political questions. See: Kloss, H.: Astand languages and Ausbau languages. *Anthropological Linguistics* 1967. 9: 29–41; Trudgill, P.: The Ausbau and Abstand sociolinguistics of linguistic minorities. In: Nelde, P. – R. Schjerve eds., *Minorities and language policy* (= *Plurilingua* 22), St. Augustin: Asgard Verlag, 2001. 37–44.

⁶ Panchuk, M.: *Політичне русинство в Україні* (The political Rusyn community in Ukraine). *Політична думка* 1995. 2–3 (6): 116–123, Majboroda, O.: Політичне русинство: Закарпатська версія периферійного націоналізму (Political Rusyn community: Transcarpathian version of peripheral nationalism). Київ: НАУКМА 1999, Pipash, V.: Політичний підтекст „русинського питання” на Закарпатті (The political background of the ‘Rusyn question’). *Закарпаття онлайн* 2012. <http://zakarpattya.net.ua/Blogs/92501-Politychnyi-pidtekst-rusynskoho-pytannia-na-Zakarpatti>. (10.11.2012)

⁷ Zap, M.: Етнічні процеси на Закарпатті (Ethnical processes in Transcarpathia). In: Vehes, M. – Cs. Fedinec eds. *Закарпаття 1919–2009 років: історія, політика, культура* (Transcarpathia 1919–2009: History, politics, and culture), 2010. 504–513. Ужгород: Поліграфцентр „Ліра”; Pipash 2012, Політичний підтекст, *op. cit.*

TABLE 1. THE POPULATION OF TRANS-CARPATHIA BY NATIVE LANGUAGE BASED ON 2001 CENSUS⁸

IDENTIFIED AS NATIVE LANGUAGE	PERSONS	%
UKRAINIAN	1 009 544	80,47
HUNGARIAN	158 729	12,65
RUSSIAN	36 412	2,90
ROMANIAN	32 224	2,57
RUSYN	6724	0,54
GIPSY	2 990	0,24
SLOVAK	2 575	0,21
GERMAN	1 850	0,15
BYELORUSSIAN	597	0,05
BULGARIAN	63	0,01
ARMENIAN	290	0,02
GAGAUZ	12	0,00
MOLDAVIAN	366	0,03
POLISH	130	0,01
YIDDISH	85	0,01
GREEK	10	0,00
OTHER LANGUAGE	1 719	0,14
DO NOT IDENTIFIED NATIVE LANGUAGE	294	0,02
TOTAL	1 254 614	100,00

The largest officially recognised minority group of the region is Hungarians. The Hungarian minority small in size; however, more than 97% of them are concentrated in the most-western administrative region of the country, Subcarpathia. Hungarians are significant in numbers in four southern districts (of Berehovo, Mukacheve, Vynohradiv, Uzhgorod), from which they make up the majority (76%) only in one: the district of Berehovo. According to the latest (2001) census the proportion of Hungarians is 12% in Subcarpathia, while at the national level it is only 0.3%⁹ The language of the Hungarian minority is one of the 13 languages to which Ukraine extended the scope

⁸ Source: Tóth, M. – I. Csernicskó: *Научно-практический комментарий Закона Украины об основах государственной языковой политики (с приложениями)* (Scientific-practical commentary on Ukraine's Law on Principles of State Language Policy). Киев: ВОО Правозащитное общественное движение «Русскоязычная Украина», 2013. 24–25.

⁹ Molnár, J. – I. Molnár D.: *Kárpátalja népessége és magyarsága a népszámlálási és népmozgalmi adatok tükrében* (Population and Hungarians of Subcarpathia in the light of census and migration data). II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskola, Beregszász. 2005.

of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and according to the 2012 Language Law it is a regional official language in the county of Subcarpathia. This minority group is organised well: they have a wide and extensive institutional network. In several kindergartens and more than a hundred schools the language of instruction is Hungarian. Some university degree programmes also use Hungarian as a medium. There is an independent Hungarian College in Berehovo established in 1996 and one of the faculties of the Uzhgorod National University has also had Hungarian degree programmes since 2008. Several civic associations, cultural centres, libraries and scientific and scholarly organizations also exist. Newspapers are published in Hungarian at both national and regional levels, literary journals and many books are published in Hungarian. Websites, TV and radio programmes also function in Hungarian. All of this means that the Hungarian language in Subcarpathia is used in many domains of language use, it is not limited to the private sphere.¹⁰

Hungarians has ethnic political parties and time to time they manage to get into the country's parliament. The Cultural Association of Hungarians in Subcarpathia (CAHS) was established in 1989 with the aim of preserving culture, national heritage, native language of Subcarpathian Hungarians, supporting Hungarian medium education and autonomy ambitions in Subcarpathia, and lobbying in related questions. In respect of autonomy on behalf of the association Géza Gulácsi elaborated a draft concept (1996), and embarked the initiation of the so-called Tisa District (Tisza-melléki járás) as a Hungarian autonomous district. It was an essential part of the CAHS electoral campaigns and was object of the agreement between the candidate Yushchenko and the Hungarian organization at the time of presidential elections in 2004. Despite of Yushchenko's victory, points of the agreement – among them the promise of the Hungarian autonomous district – was not realized and a period of Ukrainization started. The other party is the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Ukraine (DAHU) – a country-wide organization established in 1991. The party has an autonomy concept as well (2005) elaborated by István Gajdos, president of the DAHU. This draft was presented to the Ukrainian Parliament; however it did not go through the committee phase.

Despite of the representation of Hungarians in the political sphere, the Ukrainian state rejects any kind of ambitions on the part of Hungarians towards political or territorial autonomy. The rights of the Hungarian minority are individual rights and not accorded on a territorial basis. The past years show that not only the claims of Hungarians are rejected in the Parliament but also their ambition to enter the Parliament is made difficult or even impossible in an administrative way. It has been made evident by the sabotage of the establishment of an independent Hungarian electoral district in

¹⁰ Csernicskó, I.: Hungarian in Ukraine. In: Fenyvesi, A. (ed.): *Hungarian Language Contact Outside Hungary. Studies on Hungarian as a minority language*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company 2005. 89–131.; Orosz, I.: *A függetlenségtől a narancsos forradalomig. A kárpátaljai magyarság helyzete a független Ukrajnában (1991–2005)* (From the time of independence to the orange revolution: The status of Subcarpathia Hungarians in the independent Ukraine, 1991–2005). Ungvár: PoliPrint 2007.; Ferenc, V.: Challenges of Hungarian higher education in Ukraine. *Journal of Estonian and Finno-Ugric Linguistics. Special issue. Papers from the 12th International Conference on Minority Languages*. Tartu Ülikool, 2011/ 2, 141–155.

2012. The switch to mixed member proportional electoral system entails the formation of new electoral districts. Hungarians would have the possibility to present a Hungarian member of the Parliament only in case of formatting a Hungarian majority district. Despite the fact that several international organization, the Hungarian government¹¹ and both the CAHS and the DAHU urged the formation of the Hungarian majority electoral district, it was not realised.¹² According to the decision of the Central Electoral Committee all together six electoral districts were formulated in Transcarpathia and Hungarians were decided among three of them, but their ratio was under one third in each. After all CAHS launched three candidates, one in every district, however they did not manage to get mandates. President of the DAHU get one mandate on the list of the Party of Regions.

Subcarpathia has other nationalities within its population; however, their numbers are quite small and respecting autonomy they do not present clear claims. The majority of the Romanian community lives in some settlement alongside the Romanian-Ukrainian border, concentrated in Chernovtsy county. Russians are not significant in number in this western part of the country. They appeared in the region after World War II as a result of the Soviet migration policy and generally live in bigger cities. The number of Germans, who had settled in the region mainly during the 18th century, became insignificant by today. The number of Slovaks is also small. They live in the western part of the region, mainly in the town of Uzhgorod and in its surroundings.

Autonomy concepts of the Hungarian Community in Subcarpathia after 1991

Even though the constitution(s)¹³ of the Soviet Union recognized several ethnically based examples of territorial autonomy, the Hungarians of Subcarpathia had no really chance to gain an autonomous status before 1991. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine proclaimed its independence, and inherited the territory of Subcarpathia. In this phase of transition Subcarpathian Hungarians, Transcarpathian Romanians, Bulgarians and Gagauzes in Odessa county conceived their claims to autonomy, Subcarpathian Rusyns stated their intention towards secession, further on a special autonomous territory was formulated on the Crimean Peninsula.¹⁴

¹¹ Kinga Gál, Hungarian EP member remarks on the topic: http://galkinga.hu/hir/kisebbsgellenes_az_ukran_valasztokeruleti_dontes (21.04.2013)

¹² The news in the local media: <http://karpatinfo.net/hetilap/nem-lesz-magyar-valasztokorzet-karpataljan> (21.04.2013)

¹³ After the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922, three different constitutions had been adopted till 1991. Each (namely the Constitutions of 1924, 1936 and 1977) of these constitutions recognized the existence or the possibility to form a certain kind of autonomous territorial units (republics, units etc.) on an ethnical or other bases.

¹⁴ Fedinec, Cs.: Az autonómia-gondolat ukrainai változatai (Variations of autonomy-idea in Ukraine). In: Fedinec, Cs. – Z. Ilyés – A. Simon – B. Vizi (eds.) *A közép-európaiság dicsérete és kritikája* (Applause and critic of Central Europeanism). Pozsony: Kalligram, 2013. 276-277.

A referendum had been held in the Subcarpathian District of Berehovo about the question of establishing a Hungarian Autonomous District.¹⁵ Similarly, another referendum (*supra*) was also held about the special status of Subcarpathia.

The local population's supportive intention was made evident in the referendum on 1st of December, 1991, when 78% of the voters opted for the autonomy. In the Hungarian populated district of Berehovo more than 81% of the voters supported the establishment of the Hungarian autonomous district, or as alternatively called the *Tisa District*.¹⁶ Despite of these facts, Kyiv disregarded the results of the regional referendums and the autonomy of the Tisa District had not been accepted by the consecutive Ukrainian governments so far.¹⁷

The idea of autonomy meets stiff resistance from the side of the Ukrainian political powers with reference to the Constitution, which defines the country's territory as one and indivisible. From that respect autonomy ambitions often appeared in the political fights as synonyms of separatism.

However, the issue of either the territorial or the personal (cultural) autonomy is still an existing question on the political agenda of the Hungarian community of Subcarpathia. Under the aegis of the CAHS being the oldest, and perhaps the most influential Hungarian organization in Ukraine, an autonomy-concept was elaborated by Géza Gulácsi (hereafter: the Gulácsi-draft). This Gulácsi-draft is based not on the territorial but rather on a degree of personal (cultural) autonomy. The reason why the drafter dealt with the latter form of autonomy was that the Ukrainian Act on National Minorities of 1992 mentioned the right of minorities to cultural autonomy but without any further details.¹⁸ As Gulácsi rightly points out, the issue of cultural autonomy of the Hungarians living in Ukraine should be regulated in a single Act of the Ukrainian Parliament. In fact, the Gulácsi-draft wishes to make possible to form *cultural self-governments* (minority self-governments) whose organs would be democratically elected public bodies.¹⁹ Nationalities (aka. national minorities) counting more than 3000 people could establish self-governments according to the Gulácsi-draft. The principal decisive organ

¹⁵ The referendum was held on the 1st of December in 1991. The question sounded as follows: 'Should the Beregszász District be transformed into a Hungarian autonomous district?' See: Fedinec, Cs 2013. *Az autonómia gondolat ukrájnai változatai*, op. cit.

¹⁶ Fedinec, Cs.: A kárpátaljai magyar kisebbség helyzetének változásai Ukrajnában (Changes in the situation of Subcarpathian Hungarian minority in Ukraine). In: Bárdi N. – Cs. Fedinec – L. Szarka (eds.): *Kisebbségi magyar közösségek a 20. században* (Minority Hungarian communities in the twentieth century). Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó MTA Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2008.

¹⁷ Ferenc, V. – E. Herner-Kovács – G. Illyés – K. Rákóczi – P. Varga: A szomszédos országok politikai rendszere. Külföldi magyar partok (Political systems of the neighboring countries. Ethnic Hungarian parties beyond the border). In: Kántor, Z. (ed.): *Nemzetpolitikai alapismeretek* (Fundamentals of the policy for Hungarian communities abroad). Nemzeti Köszolgálati és Tankönyv Kiadó, Budapest. 2013.

¹⁸ Gulácsi, G.: A kárpátaljai magyarság jogi helyzete és autonóm törekvései (Legal status and autonomy ambitions of Subcarpathian Hungarians). In: Útközben. Tanulmányok a kárpátaljai magyarságról (On the way. Papers on the Subcarpathian Hungarians). Kárpátaljai Magyar Kulturális Szövetség, Ungvár, 1998; <http://bhrf.org/kmksz/magyarsag/autonom1.html> (2013.12.10.)

¹⁹ *Húszéves a Kárpátaljai Magyar Kulturális Szövetség 1989–2009* (Twenty years of the Cultural Association of Hungarians in Subcarpathia 1989–2009). Kárpátaljai Magyar Kulturális Szövetség, Nagyszőlős, 2009.

of the cultural self-governments would be the Council of the Nationality. The County Councils would transfer certain powers upon the Councils of the Nationality especially on the following main areas:

- Adoption of resolutions in principle concerning the operation of nationalities' (minorities') educational system;
- Adoption of resolutions in principle concerning the operation of community culture;
- Decisions on the nationalities' (minorities') 'national' monuments and historic sites;
- Decisions on the use of languages and on the language of public places and place names;
- Drafting opinions on bills concerning or touching minority issues;
- Right to make initiatives to the County Council;
- Adoption of the budget of the educational and community culture system as well as the budget of institutions of cultural self-administration;
- Establishing departments and units of cultural self-administration,
- Appointment of civil servants;
- Adoption of by-laws of the cultural self-administration.

The Council of the Nationality would have a permanent Secretariat and three departments such as the Department of Education, the Department of Community Culture, and the Department of Law and Economy-Finance. The drafter would grant legal personality to the Councils of the Nationality and the Hungarian Council's seat would be in Ungvár (Uzhgorod) being currently largest town in Subcarpathia.²⁰ Albeit, the political program of CAHS still contains provisions (and the organization campaigns for autonomy) on aiming at the autonomy of the Hungarian community in Subcarpathia,²¹ a more detailed concept or even a draft law on the issue is still lacking.

Besides the concept of CAHS, another attempt was made by the other Hungarian organization to reach the autonomy of minorities in the Ukraine. The DAHU elaborated a draft Act on the National Cultural Autonomy of National Minorities living in Ukraine (hereafter: draft Act).²² The draft Act was lodged at the Parliament of Ukraine in 2005 by István Gajdos, president of the DAHU but it was rejected by the Committees of the Parliament. The aim of the draft Act was – based under the Constitution of Ukraine and on the relevant legislation – to ensure the collective rights of national minorities in order to preserve and improve their cultural, linguistic and religious identity. National cultural autonomy is defined by the draft Act as follows: “a special form of self-organization and self-government of the Ukrainian citizens by which those who voluntarily belong to a national (minority) community have the right and the real

²⁰ *Húszéves a Kárpátaljai Magyar Kulturális*, op. cit.

²¹ Programme of the CAHS: <http://www.hhrf.org/kmksz/szervezetek/program.html> (09/02/2014)

²² For the text of the draft Act in Hungarian see the following webpage: <http://www.umdsz.uz.ua/book/autonomia.html> (09/02/2014)

possibility guaranteed by the State to decide on issues relating to their national cultural life, in accordance with the laws and the Charter of the national cultural autonomy.” According to the draft Act only those citizens of Ukraine would be entitled to establish such national cultural autonomies, who:

- belong to a certain national minority in Ukraine;
- live permanently in the territory of the state;
- have old, strong and permanent ties to Ukraine;
- have a distinct ethnic affiliation, culture, religion or language as compared to the ethnic Ukrainians; and
- composed of more than 3000 members.

Both the members of the national minority group and the national cultural autonomy would be registered at the State Committee of Ukraine on Minority and Migration Issues. Its principal organ would be the General Assembly of the Nationality being composed of indirectly elected deputies of the local national councils for a term of five years. While the local national council would be elected by the members of national minorities for four years. Organs of the national cultural autonomy would have competence on the ‘classical’ fields of representation of interests, such as the issue of culture, language, media, education, symbols, science, budgetary questions and the question of property rights. Interestingly the national cultural autonomies would have not only rights but duties as well under the draft Act. According to the intentions of the drafters, the autonomies would have to adhere to the Constitution and the laws of the Ukraine and to respect the Ukrainian nations’ and the other nations’ distinctiveness.

Regionalism in Ukraine and the country’s attitude towards autonomy ambitions

In the early years of independence Ukraine has followed a minority favoured policy in order to strengthen its own positions: the state joined to international agreements, ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, signed bilateral agreements with the neighbouring states including mutual protection of minorities living on each other territory. In 1992 Ukraine adopted the Law on National Minorities, which – among others – contains national minority’s rights to ethnic-cultural autonomy. Language Law passed in the summer of 2012 can also be conceived as a positive development respecting minorities since the language of every minority in Ukraine gets regional official status if their ratio exceeds 10% within a certain administrative unit. On the basis of the Law Russian language in nine counties, Romanian language in Chernovtsy county (12.5%), Hungarian language in Subcarpathia (12.1%), and the Crimean Tatar language in the Crimean peninsula (12.1%) became entitled being regional official language.

Nevertheless according to the Constitution (adopted in 1996) Ukraine is a unitarian state, which has one and indivisible territory. The text also refers to that certain parts of the state's territory reached their present-day form under various influences and as result of long historical processes, therefore regional distribution is a natural feature of the country. Despite of that the present administrative division is incongruous with the historically rooted regionalism. The present administrative structure was established even in the 1930s under the Soviet times, and was simply taken over by the independent Ukraine.²³ Ethnic composition of the country also results in regional divisions. Parallel to the fact that 78% of the population is ethnically Ukrainian, the number of people belonging to national minorities is significant as well. Among them Russians constitutes the largest ethnic group (17%), the ratio of all the other minority groups is respectively under 1%. According to the constitution of the country Ukraine is a monolingual country, and its official language is Ukrainian. However, in practice the ratio of Russian speaking Ukrainians (30%) exceeds the ratio of those who claimed themselves ethnically Russian and the use of Russian language is especially prevailing in the southern and eastern territories of Ukraine. Due to that the situation of minorities is deeply influenced by the actual state and trends of Russian-Ukrainian relations. The Russian 'minority' marginalizes the position of all the other minorities in Ukraine.

The Crimean Autonomous Republic has a special place among administrative units of Ukraine. The country's Constitution deals with the issue in a separate chapter (X.)²⁴ pointing that the Crimean Autonomous Republic is an unalienable part of Ukraine (Article 134). The Crimea has its own Constitution,²⁵ own government, and own parliament, however the mentioned organs cannot make decisions contrary to the country's Constitution. Neither the Constitutions of Ukraine nor of the Crimean Autonomous Republic define the type of autonomy and we cannot interpret it as an ethnically based autonomy.

Forms of minority self-governance like cultural or territorial autonomy cannot gain support, which is mainly rooted in the state's dismissive attitude. Reasons behind refusing the idea of autonomy root in the divided historical development of various parts of the country; the main aim continuously is to formulate unity. The elections in 1991 showed that the claim to autonomy is still present among the Subcarpathian people, however, it also became apparent that the ambitions on the part of the Rusyns/Ukrainians and Hungarians were not similar: both ethnic groups claimed autonomy, but not a shared one. After the Ukrainian state began to foster centralisation and strengthened its positions, all kind of autonomy ambitions were regarded as anti-constitutional, a separatist criminal act against the state's territorial integrity and security, and the centre refused to enter into a dialogue on this issue. Autonomy ambitions are rejected exactly for the reason that it could violate the unity of the young Ukrainian state and nation.

²³ Fedinec, Cs.: Regionalizmus Ukrajnában (Regionalism in Ukraine). In: Bárdi, N. – Á. Tóth (eds.) *Önazonosság és tagoltság. Elemzések a kulturális megosztottságról* (Self-identity and otherness. Analysis on cultural distribution). Budapest: Argumentum, 2013.

²⁴ Source: <http://www.president.gov.ua/en/content/chapter01.html>

²⁵ Source: <http://www.rada.crimea.ua/en/bases-of-activity/konstituciya-ARK>

Conclusions

In our paper we analysed Subcarpathian autonomy ambitions mainly from the perspective of the Hungarian minority. It has been enlightened that due to the existing ethnic and linguistic gaps in Ukraine maintaining the status quo and preserving the country's territory is the most important aim, therefore ambitions towards autonomy have little chance to get the state's support. On the occasion of the 2012 parliamentary elections the Ukrainian state administratively prevented Hungarian minority representation in the Ukrainian Parliament, and until now their claims for autonomy were rejected. The example of the Crimean Autonomous Republic cannot be interpreted as a leading case, since the legal regulation indirectly defines it as a non-ethnically based autonomy.

Apart from the lack of outer supportive factors, signs of definite commitment to autonomy on the side of the local people – so the inner factors – seem to be missing too. Members of the community are not aware of the real content of the existing autonomy concepts; they might meet the term only at times of electoral campaigns. However due to the activity of ethnic Hungarian parties the issue of Subcarpathia's autonomy is on the agenda since Ukraine's independence. The history of autonomy ambitions contains a referendum declaring commitment to the Hungarian autonomous district (1991), two draft concepts on autonomy (1996, 2005) – one of them shaped the form of a draft law –, political agreements and electoral campaign on the topic.

Hungary is an important neighbour in respect of Ukraine's EU approach, and Hungary as an EU member state can support Subcarpathian Hungarians' autonomy ambitions when both the inner and outer conditions will be satisfied for realising the autonomy. Questions like how Hungarians would relate to parallel Rusyn autonomy ambitions, how the political parties will make the people commitment to their concepts, are still waiting for response.