

Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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PRIME MINISTERS OFFICE
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COMMUNITIES ABROAD

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Árpád János Potápi: Hungarians in diaspora want to remain

In Budapest on 22 February, the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad organized the second Meeting of Hungarian Weekend Schools. The event was attended by more than 100 Hungarian teachers from the diaspora. Addressing the conference, State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi said that “Hungarians living in diaspora have already proved that they want to live and preserve their Hungarian identity.” The state secretary stressed that due to the history of Hungary, the Hungarian nation has become a world nation. Due to the cruelties of history and different political and economic changes, Hungarians dispersed all over the world. Mr. Potápi added that this process started in the 1850s and continued after that in several waves. The state secretary said that wherever we travel in the world, we can meet Hungarians and we can rely on their help. He recalled that since 2010, the Hungarian Government has paid more and more attention on the strengthening of Hungarian communities living in different parts of the world – including Hungarians living in diaspora. Speaking at the conference, Ministerial Commissioner Péter Szilágyi presented the most important programs Hungary has launched for the diaspora. Among these he mentioned the calls for applications for Hungarian diaspora organizations and weekend schools. Mr. Szilágyi added that last year these calls for applications were expanded and a total budget of HUF 500 million (EUR 1.5 million) is now available for the support of Hungarian weekend schools and diaspora organizations. Among the most important diaspora programs, Mr. Szilágyi mentioned the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Scholarship program, adding that the new call for applications will be available at the beginning of March.

Péter Szilágyi: Hungary thinks in terms of a nation instead of borders

Speaking at the 2nd Teachers’ Expo in Budapest, Ministerial Commissioner responsible for the policy of Hungarian Communities Abroad at the Prime Minister’s Office Péter Szilágyi stressed that the Hungarian Government thinks in terms of a nation instead of borders. Mr. Szilágyi stressed that the borders of the Hungarian nation are extremely wide: it is also proved by the fact that hundreds of teachers from Hungary and Hungarian communities abroad are participating in the 2nd Teachers’ Expo. Mr. Szilágyi recalled that in the 19th and 20th century, many Hungarians were forced to leave their homeland, but they did not forget their culture and mother tongue. He added that the Hungarian nation is a world nation and Hungarians – regardless of where they live in the world – can rely on their kin-state. The ministerial commissioner recalled that in 2018, as part of the Year of Hungarian Families Abroad, the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad reached more than 6,500 Hungarian families and 10,000 children abroad. He expressed the hope that the 2019 – Year of Hungarian children abroad will bring similar success.



The RMDSZ holds congress in Kolozsvár

On Friday, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) held its congress in Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca. Addressing the event, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Hungarian communities abroad and president of the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) Zsolt Semjén said that cooperation between Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the RMDSZ party's leader Hunor Kelemen is based on full trust, but the alliance between the RMDSZ and Hungary's ruling Fidesz party resulted from the will of Transylvania's Hungarian voters rather than from an accord between the two politicians. Mr. Semjén added that it was the Transylvanian Hungarians who voted by an overwhelming majority for the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania in the Romanian elections and for Fidesz in the Hungarian elections. The Deputy Prime Minister added that "Nothing that weakens the RMDSZ is acceptable," adding that a weaker RMDSZ would no longer be able to represent Hungarians effectively in the Transylvanian municipalities and the Bucharest parliament.

Speaking at the congress, the reelected president of the RMDSZ Hunor Kelemen promised the continuation of the "politics of pragmatic Transylvanism." He added that the RMDSZ consists of people with different ideologies: conservatives, liberals, Christian democrats and social democrats, government supporters and oppositionists, but they have something in common: their joint ideology is pragmatic Transylvanism.

As part of the congress, Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén and the leaders of Hungarian organizations in the Carpathian Basin signed a declaration on cooperation within the EU. In the declaration the parties state that they will jointly promote the interests of Hungarian communities in the Carpathian Basin in the European Union. They also declare that they will also enforce the protection of the rights of indigenous minorities and press for the adoption of a European minority protection law. The agreement also calls for providing Hungarians satisfactory living conditions to keep them in their native lands. It insists that the European Union should support this effort with growing rather than diminishing funds.



József Menyhárt withdraws his presidential candidacy

Speaking in Pozsony/Bratislava on Tuesday, the head of the Party of the Hungarian Community József Menyhárt announced that he would withdraw his Slovakian presidential candidacy in favor of the strongest candidate from the opposition, Robert Mistrík. Mr. Menyhárt justified his decision – which was also confirmed by the national council of the MKP – with the necessity of "joint bearing responsibility." The head of the MKP also called on other candidates of "the democratic right-wing" to re-evaluate their standpoints connected with their candidacy and asked Hungarian voters to support Robert Mistrík.



Péter Szijjártó: Hungary and Slovakia are allies

Following talks with the Foreign Minister of Slovakia, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó said that “Hungary and Slovakia are allied and neighboring countries, and in recent years both sides have worked hard to ensure that this previously unimaginable sentence can now be stated.” At their joint press conference, the Minister highlighted that “bilateral cooperation on the most important issues relating to the future of Europe remains close, both countries are taking a stand against illegal migration, and are both continuing to take a stand against mandatory resettlement quotas”. Mr. Szijjártó said that in his opinion dynamically developing Hungarian-Slovakian relations are advantageous to both Slovakian Hungarians and Slovaks living in Hungary. He added that last year bilateral trade exceeded ten billion euros. The minister stressed that Slovakia is Hungary’s third most important trade partner, adding that the Hungarian Government will continue its economic development program in Slovakia and will develop transport links: the new Danube bridge at Komárom/Komárno and the motorway connection at Rajka will both be opened next year.



Further renovated nursery schools in Transcarpathia

As part of the Carpathian Basin nursery school program, further renovated kindergartens were handed over in Transcarpathia – this time in Déda/Dijda and Batár/Bratove. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, ministerial commissioner István Grezsa stressed that the inauguration ceremonies have a symbolic meaning. This year – after the Hungarian Roman Catholic Kindergarten in Munkács/Mukachevo – further two kindergartens were handed over. This shows that circumstances in Hungarian kindergartens in Transcarpathia were really unacceptable before the start of the program. The ministerial commissioner stressed that every Hungarian child is entitled to a “good learning environment”, and children now can continue their studies in a modern, renovated building. Mr. Grezsa stressed that the devoted work of the Greek Catholic church and local kindergarten teachers played an important role in this process.



László Kövér: the strengthening of the economy helps the permanence of national minorities

The Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly has made an official visit to Slovenia. After talks with his Slovenian counterpart Dejan Židan, Mr. Kövér said that Hungarian-Slovenian ties set an example to Europe for how to handle minority issues. Speaking at a press conference, Mr. Kövér said that the two countries plan to submit a



joint proposal regarding minority issues when it comes to debates concerning Europe's future. The Hungarian house speaker noted that around 10% of Europeans are ethnic minorities from the continent, therefore, working out European minority standards is a Europe-wide issue. Speaking in Felsőszölnök in Hungary, Mr. Kövér said that together with the efforts to preserve their culture and mother tongue, strengthening the economy in the border regions helps minorities to survive. He added that plans to develop the region have been drafted and will be submitted to the Hungarian government soon.



Hungarians living in Sweden protect the Hungarian Government's family protection action

The National Association of Hungarians in Sweden (SMOSZ) has sent a statement to the Hungarian news agency MTI, protecting the Hungarian Government's family protection action plan. In their statement, they wrote that "it is unclear why the family protection action plan announced by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has become a hotly debated issue. It is the sovereign right and responsibility of every country to help the prosperity of its citizens according to its possibilities." According to the statement, Hungarians living in Sweden "watch with deep concern the sharp ideological difference between their kin-state, Hungary and their elected homeland, Sweden, which was caused by the new Hungarian family protection action plan." They add that "as citizens of Sweden, we are proud of the world famous and recognized Swedish social welfare system which ensures welfare for every resident of Sweden. The new Hungarian family protection action plan aims to serve the same goals: it is not discriminative, since it is open for every citizen of Hungary, regardless of ethnicity or religious affiliation. Everyone can decide whether they use this opportunity or not."

