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HOME ACROSS THE BORDER:  
SUBCARPATHIAN HUNGARIAN IMMIGRATION  
TO KISVÁRDA

**Abstract:** Hungarians form a significant minority in the Subcarpathia region of far western Ukraine. In recent decades, many Subcarpathian Hungarians have immigrated to Hungary. This paper explores the phenomenon of Subcarpathian Hungarian immigration to Kisvárdá, Hungary – a small city near the border of Ukraine – and its surrounding villages from the fall of the Soviet Union to the present. It examines these immigrants’ motivations for leaving Subcarpathia and for choosing the Kisvárdá region, the nature of their transition to life in Hungary, and their feelings about their own identity. It touches on the economic, cultural, and political factors impacting these immigrants, including the effects of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Hungarian government’s 2011 offer of citizenship to all ethnic Hungarians. It also considers the unique conditions of three distinct phases of immigration.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was a time of great flux for Zakarpattia Oblast, a region running along the Carpathian Mountains and the Hungarian border at the southwestern corner of Ukraine. Its territory changed hands no less than five times over roughly the past hundred years. It began the 1900s as part of the Kingdom of Hungary, before switching to Czechoslovakia, then back to Hungary, then the Soviet Union, and finally, Ukraine. The ethnic diversity of this small chunk of land no bigger than Montenegro tells a similarly complex story. Historically, it has been the shared home of Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Russians, Germans, Slovaks, Romanians, Jews, Roma, and Hungarians.

The region remains of particular importance to Hungarians today. Its Ukrainian name, Zakarpattia, means Transcarpathia or “beyond the Carpathians.” The Hungarians, looking on from the west, know it as Kárpátalja, meaning Subcarpathia or “base of the Carpathians.” Subcarpathia belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary for centuries and the history of its cities, like Beregszász (Berehove) and Munkács (Mukachevo), is intertwined with that of Hungary. The Hungarians lost the territory in 1920 in the Treaty of Trianon, the post-World War I negotiations that ultimately divided up over two-thirds of Hungary’s

land among its neighbors. Many Hungarians remain very fond of these lost regions still today and Hungary's government under the right-leaning Fidesz party has prioritized support for the ethnic Hungarian communities that remain. While the population of much of the lost territory was predominantly Slovak, Romanian, Serb, or Ukrainian, the lost territories also included Hungarians and even entire Hungarian-majority cities and regions. Today, some 1.8 million Hungarians live outside of Hungary within the Carpathian Basin. In Subcarpathia, the Hungarians straddle a narrow strip of land along the Hungarian border. They make up the most substantial ethnic minority group in Subcarpathia, numbering at roughly 150,000 and accounting for some 12% of the population according to Ukraine's most recent census in 2001. Much has changed in Subcarpathia since that time, however, owing to a high level of emigration. It is a common theme in Ukraine, a country whose population is estimated to have decreased by roughly ten million – one-fifth – since 2001.

One recipient of this flow of Subcarpathians – and especially Subcarpathian Hungarians – has been Kisvárdá, the closest Hungarian city with a population above 10,000 to the Ukrainian border. Located some twenty kilometers from Subcarpathia, Kisvárdá is the final stop before the border town of Záhony on the major rail line connecting Budapest and Kyiv. It is situated in a flat agricultural landscape typical of Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg County. A portion of the historical Bereg County of the Kingdom of Hungary remains in Hungary, just to the east of Kisvárdá, but the majority lies in Zakarpattia Oblast. That includes Beregszász, the Ukrainian city with the highest Hungarian population, located roughly forty miles from Kisvárdá.

The fall of the Soviet Union made emigration from Ukraine more accessible for Subcarpathians. Some Hungarians from the region began to take the opportunity to settle or work temporarily in Hungary. It became an even more attractive option in 2011 when the Hungarian government made it easier to obtain Hungarian citizenship – and thus an EU passport – to all ethnic Hungarians throughout the Carpathian Basin and the global diaspora. The 2010s in Ukraine were marked by the Russian occupation of Crimea and conflict between Ukraine and Russian-backed separatists in the east. A more Europe-aligned government began making efforts to promote the Ukrainian language and a unified Ukrainian identity, which, though directed at the Russian minority, also affected the Hungarian population of Subcarpathia. The serious escalation of the conflict initiated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has led many to flee Ukraine, including Subcarpathia, as refugees. While most refugees who crossed the nearby border only passed through Kisvárdá on their way further west, many – generally Hungarians – also chose to remain.

This paper explores the phenomenon of migration of Subcarpathian Hungarians to Kisvárdá and its surrounding villages (the Kisvárdá region) since the regime change that came for Hungary and Ukraine with the fall of communism and the Soviet Union. The research was conducted on the basis of seventeen interviews with Subcarpathian Hungarian immigrants to the Kisvárdá region and twelve interviews with both Hungarians – from Subcarpathia and elsewhere – and Ukrainians knowledgeable in issues relevant to the topic.

## **Push and pull factors**

Economics has been the predominant motive for emigration. Although Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg County is among the least developed counties in Hungary, it is relatively prosperous compared to Subcarpathia. Ukraine's GDP per capita ranks second-to-last in Europe (surpassing only Moldova) and Zakarpattia is the oblast with the lowest GDP per capita in all of Ukraine. Many Subcarpathian Hungarians have crossed the border seeking the better wages and employment opportunities that Hungary, an EU member, provides. This often takes the form of circular migration, as Subcarpathian Hungarians find seasonal employment and split their time between the two sides of the border. Such moves can also become long-lasting, as men who began by taking up work in Hungary away from their wives and children in Subcarpathia eventually make a permanent move with their family. Many immigrants found the better standard of living to be one of the main differences that they experienced between life in Subcarpathia and in the Kisvárdá region.

Cultural considerations have played a similarly significant role in their migration decision-making process. Many of the immigrants interviewed felt a desire to live in a fully Hungarian environment in which their identity and language are the norm. There is a strong sense among these immigrants that, at least until recently, Hungarians lived in harmony with their Ukrainian and other non-Hungarian neighbors in the region. Many relate having been on good terms with non-Hungarians and having felt little to no discrimination or disadvantage for belonging to a cultural minority. Recent developments, however, have caused some to feel a sense of uneasiness in being Hungarian in Subcarpathia. The Ukrainian government's measures regarding language have been of particular concern. They oppose the Ukrainian government's laws promoting Ukrainian at the expense of minority languages like Hungarian in signage, public usage, and, above all, education. In interviews, some parents noted that ensuring a Hungarian-language education for their children was an important consideration when weighing whether to move to Hungary.

Some also sense that Subcarpathia's changing demographics have contributed to the erosion of its friendly multiethnic atmosphere. In recent years of war, many Ukrainians from other parts of the country have moved to relatively safe Subcarpathia. Many feel that these new arrivals are not as welcoming of the Hungarians as the Ukrainians who have lived among them historically. One immigrant who left several months after the Russian invasion said that some of the newcomers were of questionable character and made her feel unsafe in her home village. Another stated that some of these newcomers feel that Hungarians are living on their land or are taking their jobs. In the opinion of one interviewee, many of these Ukrainians simply do not like Hungarians. She recounted that an acquaintance of hers who had such an attitude was shocked when she revealed that she was Hungarian and began to reconsider his views.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also had a stark impact on Hungarians living in Subcarpathia. Although the region has been almost completely free of conflict, the invasion created a sense of uncertainty and insecurity. In addition to leading to the flow of domestic refugees, it interrupted aspects of daily life, such as energy availability during the winter. It has been an important consideration for many Hungarians who decided to leave the region. A primary concern for Subcarpathian Hungarians on both sides of the border has been the military draft, which can call upon any man with Ukrainian citizenship between the ages of eighteen and sixty. One immigrant expressed a great gratitude for Hungarian citizenship, which allowed him to emigrate from Ukraine before the invasion and thus avoid the draft. Many worry about the possibility of a loved one in Subcarpathia being sent to fight in the east. Many of these men, unable to leave the country, live in hiding. Subcarpathian men on the other side of the border, are not able to return to visit. Women and children then are the only ones able to enter the country to see family or check on property. One immigrant explained that her family members have no desire to join the fight for Ukraine, a country they feel little attachment to.

Kisvárdá's proximity to Subcarpathia is an important pull factor, making it easier to maintain contact with family and friends across the border. Those who have moved to the area cite this as a benefit that comes with choosing Kisvárdá, if not a main motivating factor. Covid border closures and the military draft have made crossing between Hungary and Subcarpathia much more difficult in recent years. For those who are able, such visits are very common.

Chain migration has also played a significant role. Many came to the area through prior connections, sometimes as a result of persuasion attempts from such connections. Most immigrants report having either explicitly encouraged Subcarpathian family and friends

to join them in Hungary or at least having had an impact on them making that decision. Those who encouraged loved ones to follow in their footsteps sometimes did so on their own initiative and sometimes in response to interest.

Some bring up the fact that part of the area's appeal is its familiarity. Some ruled out the idea of moving to Budapest because they see it as far too busy, noisy, and chaotic, a far cry from rural atmosphere of Subcarpathia. One immigrant recalled how strange it felt to live in a small apartment in Nyíregyháza, a city of about 100,000, after having grown up in a village house. The more relaxed atmosphere of Kisvárdá helps make for a simpler transition. One immigrant, however, said that even Kisvárdá, with its 16,000 inhabitants, felt too big for her family. Another explained that part of what makes Kisvárdá appealing to him is the fact that the local Hungarians have "similar thinking."

Some emigrants from Subcarpathia have gone on further to Budapest, western Hungary, or other European countries like Germany. Immigrants in the Kisvárdá area said that those they knew who went further west did so primarily in response to more lucrative employment opportunities. They also generally stated that they did not consider going to another region of Hungary or elsewhere in Europe and expressed contentment with their decision to remain. Three recently-graduated high school students (two Hungarians and one Ukrainian) are an exception to that rule, having moved away for work or further studies in bigger cities in Hungary. Some noted that young adults are more likely to pass over Kisvárdá for further destinations.

Age plays a key role in migration decisions. Those who choose to remain in Subcarpathia are more likely to be older and retired. Considerations surrounding employment and the draft have little relevance to them and they may feel less willing to break their attachment to their property and homeland to start a new life in Hungary. The result is an increasingly less youthful population in Subcarpathia.

## **Immigration phases**

Migration of Subcarpathian Hungarians to the Kisvárdá region since the fall of communism can be divided into three groups: 1) those who came before Hungary began offering citizenship to ethnic Hungarians living outside the borders of Hungary, 2) those who came after the citizenship offer but before the Russian invasion of 2022, and 3) those who came after the invasion. While the economic and cultural motives play a factor with each category, they also display distinct patterns.

Those who came before the citizenship offer of 2011 tended to be educated professionals such as doctors and teachers who arrived to the region in response to job opportunities. Some of them eventually went further on to other countries in western Europe. Those who came later tended to be from a wider array of professional backgrounds. Receiving Hungarian citizenship took a great deal of effort for this group and was seen as a meaningful milestone. Those who left shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 felt very little connection to the new Ukrainian state that they had lived under for only a brief period. Those in this group were trailblazers in moving to Hungary, setting an example for their families and friends. They came alone as young adults and were either the first or one of the first in their families to leave. Some recall having encouraged others to follow their example.

Hungary's opening of an easy path to citizenship through ancestry in 2011 made settling in Hungary much more accessible for the Hungarians of Subcarpathia. Many took advantage of the offer. It appears to also have made many seriously consider a move to Hungary. Subcarpathian Hungarians began finding their place in Hungary using connections with those who had already moved. Despite a love for their homeland, members of this group sometimes express discontent with society in Subcarpathia. Ukraine's policy toward minority languages, which shifted in 2012, came as a very upsetting development to many in this group. While this was not the key deciding factor for most emigrants, it is at the forefront of their thoughts about the current situation in Subcarpathia. Though the 2022 invasion led to an increase in emigration, the conflict, which has been ongoing since 2014, has affected this group's emigration decision-making too.

Those who left Subcarpathia for the Kisvárda region following the escalation of the war in February 2022 had a much different experience from those who came before. The suddenness of the invasion of Ukraine meant that this group had less time to prepare for the move than those who emigrated before them. While those who came prior to 2022 often spent years deliberating their decisions and were able to make arrangements before making the move, those who left due to war made their decisions under more pressing circumstances. One family left within twenty-four hours of the invasion, packing only several days-worth of clothing and expecting to return shortly. Before long, they made a circle of friends in a village near Kisvárda and decided to remain. Some encountered a scarcity of housing, likely due to the increased number of Subcarpathian Hungarians moving into the region. There was a period of uncertainty between leaving Subcarpathia and settling into a more stable living arrangement. While the region's population took in new immigrants, the Hungarian community back in Subcarpathia struggled with the loss of emigrants. One

member of this group recounted that her home village felt like a ghost town. This group also expressed discomfort with Ukraine's minority language policies. Some had never previously taken the prospect of moving to Hungary into serious consideration. Despite this, the members of this group felt at home in Hungary and, after just a year-and-a-half since the invasion, have little to no intention to return to Subcarpathia. This group also felt welcomed upon arrival in Hungary, receiving support in finding housing from local government and feeling that local churches were available for help should they require it. Some of these emigrants still have property back in Subcarpathia and occasionally return to check on it. In all cases, the father of the household had already been working in Hungary prior to the decision to move. One member of this group pointed out that families whose father had already been working abroad at the outbreak of invasion left and those whose father was working in Subcarpathia stayed.

One commonality between all groups was a sense of pessimism about the future of the Hungarian community of Subcarpathia. There are three primary reasons that they give for this pessimism: the decrease in the Hungarian population of the region, the increase in the Ukrainian population of the region, and the assimilating effect they believe the Ukrainian government's approach to minorities will have on the Hungarian population. The immigrants interviewed often expressed feeling that there is nothing to go back to in Subcarpathia. Almost all have connections with family and friends in the region, but they are content to remain in Hungary and visit occasionally. Others, though, have very few personal connections remaining. Some express a desire to help and a feeling of responsibility for the Hungarian community of Subcarpathia, but feel little efficacy or opportunity to do so. A common pattern in immigration stories among the two groups that immigrated after 2011 is that the father of the household had already been working in Hungary, often for several years, before the family decided to officially make the move. The father's social connections and job made the transition to Hungary much smoother. Many families expressed relief at being able to finally live together without a border separating them. Their wives tended to have little trouble in finding work after arrival in Hungary. One immigrant who came in the 1990s noted that she has noticed that emigration out of Subcarpathia – and especially emigration of entire families – has become even more common in recent years.

## Transition

Family tended to be a very important anchor for those who chose to stay in the Kisvárd region. Family ties kept immigrants close to the border, chain migration helped pave the way for immigration, and children played a significant role in families' decisions to put down roots in the Kisvárd region. Some who were initially uncertain about remaining in Kisvárd changed their minds for their children's sakes. As children developed new friendships and the parents became connected to the school community, the idea of remaining appeared more natural. For some, the opportunity to provide their children with an education that was of a higher quality and offered in Hungarian was a powerful reason to leave Ukraine for Hungary.

Some immigrants initially came to Hungary with an intent to return to Subcarpathia, either planning a temporary move or a tentative move that may or may not lead to a return depending on the success of the transition. They generally made their decision to remain in the Kisvárd region after a short period of time. Many found themselves increasingly satisfied with life there, began establishing social bonds, and felt more and more accustomed to their new life, making the idea of return seem less feasible and desirable. Most immigrants interviewed, however, arrived in the Kisvárd region with a view of their move as permanent. While they felt affection for Subcarpathia and maintained ties there, they made their decision to leave out of a confidence that a better future awaited in Hungary.

Many found the transition to the Kisvárd region very easy and reported feeling at home. Due to the high similarity of the cultural context of Subcarpathian Hungarians and Hungarians from northeastern Hungary, difficulties arising from cultural differences were negligible. The shared language made life easier and more comfortable in some ways compared to Subcarpathia. One immigrant recalls feeling very pleased when she first arrived to be able to use Hungarian while shopping. Making friends and establishing social webs – both through connections from back in Subcarpathia and among locals – went well for the immigrants. The success of such integration is dependent somewhat on personality. One immigrant recalls having a difficult time getting established in the community due to shyness. Others found local Hungarians to be a bit colder than people back home and considered the change in environment and people challenging.

While the transition to life in Hungary was smooth overall, many reported missing their home in Subcarpathia as they began a new phase of their life. It usually entailed not just leaving their hometown and social connections, but also starting a new job, a



marriage, and finding a new home. For those who came before 2011, obtaining residence permits and citizenship was a tedious and frustrating ordeal. One member of this group expressed a feeling of injustice at having to undergo the same the same processes as immigrants from distant foreign countries despite being an ethnic Hungarian and speaking native Hungarian. Another recalled that the bureaucratic procedures even required that she show proof that she had no overdue library books. Another reported feeling unsettled that in recent years even those with little to no Hungarian language knowledge have been able to obtain citizenship.

Some explained that what really makes Kisvárda feel like home is the people. For them, Subcarpathia or Kisvárda are merely places, spots on a map. A place comes alive and has meaning once it is filled with friends and family. Subcarpathia feels distant for those who have little family left in the region. Though it represents many good memories, it has little to no role in the present. Many expressed that Subcarpathia remains and always will remain their homeland, a place for which they have a great fondness.

While these immigrants have by and large felt very satisfied with the reception they received from locals, there are several negative stereotypes related to Subcarpathia within the local community. Many associate Subcarpathia with the black market due to the fact that the practice of smuggling goods like cigarettes that are much cheaper in Ukraine has been common at the Ukraine-Hungary border. Due to a pension reciprocity agreement during the Soviet era, Hungarians and Ukrainians can collect a pension in their country of residence – either Hungary or Ukraine – regardless of citizenship. This led many pensioners from Ukraine to purchase property just across the border in Hungary (often pretending to “share” the same property with many other people) with the sole intent of collecting a Hungarian pension.

## **Subcarpathian Hungarian identity**

Subcarpathian Hungarians in Hungary continue to self-identify as Subcarpathian Hungarians when prompted. They also express that they will always in some sense be a Subcarpathian Hungarian, seeing it as an unchangeable fact. That label bears some meaning for them, but its exact nature is unclear. Few have a clear definition of what it means and do not tend to give it much thought. They often express a love of their homeland, their memories of it, and the connections they maintain there.

Despite the cultural similarity, several differences have developed between the two sides of the border. Some Subcarpathian Hungarians maintain that they have a special resilience and survival instinct that Hungarians across the border do not, owing perhaps to the experience of living under poorer economic conditions and being a minority group in Ukraine. Some perceive Subcarpathian Hungarians to be more open, warm, social, and friendly. There is a subtle impression that Hungarians in Hungary have lived in easier conditions and thus have become softer and less community-oriented than the Hungarians in Hungary. Others suggested that they have a better sense of style, wearing more fashionable clothes and doing a better job of keeping their home and yard looking nice. The value of music also came up in interviews. Many of the teachers at the music school in Kisvárdá are of Subcarpathian Hungarian origin. Subcarpathian Hungarians have a reputation in town for being musically gifted. Some of the teachers noted that music was always an important part of their family and community growing up. One music school staff member noted that there has been an uptick in Subcarpathian families in Kisvárdá of both Hungarian and Slavic origin and that it seems that all of them enroll their children in the music school. Some noted that the arrival of these teachers had a great impact on the quality of music education in Kisvárdá. Religion was another area of perceived difference. Some observed that the Hungarians from Subcarpathia tend to be more religious and more traditional in general. One Hungarian Reformed pastor in the Kisvárdá region noted that he is impressed with the faith of the Subcarpathian Hungarians and notices a high level of commitment from the confirmation students.

Receiving Hungarian citizenship was not only an important practical step for the immigrants, but also a deeply symbolic accomplishment. One immigrant recalls that her father broke down in tears when he received official notification of his citizenship. Another explains that his mother had a strong desire to reclaim the Hungarian citizenship she lost many years ago. For many, this kind of recognition from the government of Hungary was an important visible confirmation of their identity as a Hungarian. It meant that being Hungarian was now an official status, something that they could tangibly prove. Before the 2011 citizenship law changes, some felt off-put by a feeling that Hungary treated them as a sort of second-class Hungarian, or perhaps not even a Hungarian at all.

A strong sense of Hungarian identity tends to go hand in hand with a lack of identification with the Ukrainian identity or Ukrainian state. Most – including those who spent many years in independent Ukraine after the fall of the Soviet Union – feel little attachment to Ukraine. It has little relevance to them as Hungarians and seems to be viewed primarily as an inconvenient tangential circumstance in their lives. While they may live

within the modern borders of Ukraine and hold Ukrainian passports, their concept of being Ukrainian means being ethnically Ukrainian. They view themselves exclusively as Hungarians. Several immigrants mentioned the fact that many Hungarians from Hungary will often refer to them as Ukrainians. They find this to be puzzling, disappointing, slightly annoying, or some combination thereof. Most attributed this to ignorance, not prejudice or bad intentions and do not interpret it as an offense or insult. They lament the fact that many Hungarians lack a good understanding of the Hungarian communities outside the borders of Hungary.

Their views toward the Ukrainian government are generally negative. Many had harsh words for it and assigned it some of the blame for a decrease in the Hungarian presence in the region. Some refer to a high level of corruption in government and society at large. Discontent with corruption also can play a role in the migration decision-making process, as some feel that the only way to get ahead in society in Subcarpathia is to play by unfair rules. One couple felt that they could have used their connections to live very well in Ukraine had they been open to participating in corruption. The fact that they were not played a big role in their decision to leave and settle in a village near Kisvárda. They are especially unhappy with the current government's approach to Hungarian minority rights issues. They feel that the Ukrainian government, unlike the supportive Hungarian government, has little concern for Hungarians in the region.

There appears to be a divide of opinion between Subcarpathian Hungarians and Ukrainians regarding the situation of the Hungarians in Subcarpathia. Most Hungarian immigrants were pessimistic about the situation, citing government policies and a perceived prejudice among Ukrainians. Ukrainians interviewed, though they were happy and integrated into Hungarian society, were more likely to say that they sensed that the Hungarian situation in Subcarpathia is quite good.

## **Organizations**

The Subcarpathian Hungarian community makes up a portion of the population of Kisvárda, but it cannot be described as a very organized or visible community. Of course, the Subcarpathian Hungarians in Kisvárda are unlike most immigrant groups in that their culture fits in better in their new home than in the home they left behind. They came from a region in which they were surrounded by foreign cultures and within a country in which

their nationality made up an insignificant sliver of the population. In the Kisvárda region, they are surrounded by their own language and culture in all aspects of life. It produces a sense of familiarity and comfort. Many come from villages in Subcarpathia that are almost exclusively Hungarian, so their move to northeastern Hungary is less like international migration and more like internal migration within the same country. The experience is in fact quite the opposite from most immigrant groups, who move from their familiar homeland surrounded by their own culture to a new foreign culture.

This unique scenario accounts for the fact that the Subcarpathian Hungarians have made little effort to organize themselves in the Kisvárda region. The environment is not foreign enough to encourage them to band together through cultural institutions and activities. While naturally there are friend groups between Subcarpathian Hungarians that form through shared connections back home, their social circles are by no means limited to Subcarpathian Hungarians. They find assimilation into the community quite seamless and, despite a love for their homeland and continued self-identification as Subcarpathians, the fact that they come from Subcarpathia has almost no practical significance in their lives.

Reformed churches in the Kisvárda region have established links with Reformed churches in the Subcarpathia region and the pastors of both regions meet from time to time. The Hungarian Byzantine Catholic church (which Hungarians commonly refer to as the Greek Catholic church) also has a strong presence in Subcarpathia. The Greek Catholic church in Kisvárda is an important institution for many people of Subcarpathian origin in the city, particularly those with Ruthenian heritage.

High schools in Kisvárda have been attracting students from Subcarpathia since before the outbreak of war. These students stay in the high school dormitories and tend to travel home on weekends. They come for a better education and for the ability to learn in Hungarian. Two recently-graduated Subcarpathian Hungarian immigrants expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their school experience in Kisvárda. Both chose to continue their studies in Hungary after graduation. They felt no ill will from other students for having come from Ukraine. One explained that the other students were very impressed by her ability to speak Ukrainian and Russian. One young Ukrainian immigrant who attended school in Kisvárda, however, said that he felt that some Hungarians looked down on him for being ethnically Ukrainian.

Kisvárda is the home of the Kárpátalja Ház (Subcarpathia House), a center dedicated to the needs of the Hungarian community of Subcarpathia. It forms part of the Magyar

Házak Hálózat (Hungarian Houses Network), a nationwide organization that operates similar offices for other extraterritorial Hungarian communities such as the Felvidék Haz in Miskolc and the Délvidék Haz in Szeged. The center hosts programs related to Hungarian Subcarpathia, provides support such as accommodation to newly-arrived immigrants both Hungarian and Ukrainian, and takes on key responsibilities in organizing war-related refugee relief efforts in the region, including receiving and distributing aid from outside Hungary. Locals in the Kisvárdá region also offered support to those crossing the border into Hungary. The local government of Kisvárdá organized efforts at the border for incoming refugees. In the village of Pap, the local government, offered temporary housing for newcomers. Community members volunteered their time at the border to help with packages and translation. Churches also provided assistance.

### **Other immigration from Subcarpathia**

The experience of another immigrant group from Subcarpathia, the Ruthenians, provides a noteworthy contrast. The Kisvárdá region has a sizeable Ruthenian community that does maintain active organized activities. The Ruthenian minority self-government supports this. Unlike the Subcarpathian Hungarians, the Ruthenians hold regular events that bring their community together. The Ruthenian experience in Kisvárdá bears a much closer resemblance to the typical immigrant experience; they came from Subcarpathia speaking a Slavic language and moved into Hungary, a country whose culture – though not unknown to them – is not their own.

Several immigrants noticed a recent uptick in the local Ukrainian population. Ukrainian immigrants living in the Kisvárdá region were happy with life there and had integrated well, learning to speak fluent Hungarian. They had established close connections and generally felt welcomed. One immigrant noted that she and her husband raised their children entirely in Hungarian, to the point that they never learned to speak Ukrainian. According to one Subcarpathian Hungarian immigrant, the same harmony among nationalities that he remembers from Subcarpathia is present today in Kisvárdá.

## Conclusion

Hungarians have resided in what is today known as Subcarpathia for centuries. The fall of the Soviet Union marked a new era for this population. Separated from the wider Hungarian community since the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, they became free to live in the Hungarian state once again through immigration. Because many took this option, the region has experienced a decrease in its population and faces an uncertain future. For northeastern Hungary, it also marked the beginning of the new phenomenon of immigration from Subcarpathia. These immigrants came largely for economic reasons, seeking the better opportunities that Hungary afforded. But they also came escaping the challenges associated with living in a country at war and being a minority in a tense political environment. They chose the Kisvárdá region to remain close to their homeland, but they have also made it their new home. Their transition has been positive overall and free from the challenges of identity and assimilation that many immigrants face. Those who came before the Hungarian government's offer of citizenship in 2011 braved difficulties in moving and blazed the trail for those who came after. Those who came post-2011 were attracted by the possibilities of life as a Hungarian citizen and were eager to leave behind discrimination, war, and corruption. They do so while maintaining a love for Subcarpathia and continuing to identify as Subcarpathians.

While Subcarpathia and the Kisvárdá region are small, peripheral parts of their countries, they offer a window into the larger stories of emigration from Ukraine at a critical point in its history and the experience of the Hungarian minority communities of the Carpathian Basin. While these immigrants have experienced hardship in Subcarpathia, they have found success in establishing themselves in Hungary, integrating quickly and finding satisfaction with their new home across the border. Going forward, this migration will continue to blur the lines between Hungary and Subcarpathia as relationships that span the border bind the two closer together. A greater presence of Subcarpathian Hungarians in Hungary may also raise awareness within Hungary of the situation of the Subcarpathian Hungarian community. The impacts going forward will be felt in Subcarpathia, the Kisvárdá region, Hungary, and throughout the Hungarian communities of the Carpathian Basin.