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KIN-STATE RESPONSIBILITY: FROM FEELING TO BEARING

Abstract: This article analyzes the evolution of Hungarian kin-state policy since the democratic transition, situating it within the broader European process of national re-institutionalization. It conceptualizes kin-state policy as a distinct field of state activity through which responsibility toward co-nationals living beyond state borders is articulated and operationalized. The study examines the constitutional and legal foundations of this responsibility, with particular emphasis on citizenship, voting rights, and the institutionalization of transborder nationhood. It further explores the administrative structures, diaspora policy instruments, and support mechanisms designed to sustain collective identity, community reproduction, and socio-economic viability among Hungarian communities abroad. The article argues that Hungarian kin-state policy exemplifies a broader transformation in state–nation relations in post-Cold War Europe. It concludes that transborder nation-building has become a stable and enduring component of contemporary statehood.

Introduction

At the time of the breakdown of the communist regimes, the responsibility of states towards their co-nationals living abroad was often an unknown concept (and practice) from both a legal and political point of view. This is true not only for Hungary but also for the entire region. Now, 35 years later, we can see that there are hardly any European states that are indifferent to their co-nationals living in other countries. Perhaps the most accurate term for this process is national re-institutionalization. This paper focuses primarily on the process and current status of the re-institutionalization of the Hungarian nation, but it is worth emphasizing that Hungary is not alone in this regard: other states are also implementing similar kin-state policy measures. It should also be noted that the issue of institutionalized support for those living abroad must be sharply distinguished from the historical and current political practices of certain states that use their co-nationals to

undermine the stability of other states.¹ This article deliberately ignores this aspect and focuses only on efforts to develop positive political, cultural, and economic cooperation, which are in the interests not only of Hungary and Hungarians living beyond its borders but also of neighboring states.

Today, the principle of supporting co-nationals belonging to the same nation but living in other (neighboring or non-neighboring) states can be found in most constitutions, with rare exceptions, in the form of a so-called “responsibility clause,” while in the period following the change of regime, the states of Central and Eastern Europe mainly supported their co-nationals living beyond their borders through political declarations and programs. Today, it has become clear that the essence of any kin-state policy is to support co-nationals living anywhere in the world and to strengthen their ties to their kin-state, and this is also manifested in legislative and executive activities. A state responsible for its nation is responsible not only for the socialization of its own citizens but also for supporting the self-organization of minority groups living abroad. It is worth noting here that this support is primarily of an auxiliary nature. For example, the results of the Venice Commission’s review of the Hungarian Status Law and similar other laws of other states have shown that states that maintain the residence of minorities under their sovereignty have a primary responsibility for preserving and developing the identity of those communities.

Before the change of regime, not only was there no talk of kin-state policy, but the states of Central and Eastern Europe ignored those living abroad. Today, this has changed radically, but in general, even on a global scale, it can be said that, with the exception of states organized around ideologies that deny national character, all states treat their co-nationals living abroad in a special way.

The 35 years since the change of regime have been about the kin-states, including Hungary, interpreting and implementing kin-state policy within a unified framework, and we are also seeing that kin-state policy measures are constantly evolving as states adapt to changing situations. In the space of a few decades, we have reached a point where those living abroad—whether in neighboring states or in the diaspora—form an integral part of the states and politics of the region, whether it be state-run (kin-state policy) administration, support for the repatriation of those living abroad, or programs and support aimed at preserving their identity. For states with co-nationals, this nation-building is complex and operates along two dimensions: domestic and cross-border. In this paper, we aim to provide an overview of the relevant Hungarian experiences.

1 In this regard, see, for example, Krisztián Manzinger, “20. és 21. századi európai példák a nemzetiségi kérdés és az állam vélt biztonsági megfontolásainak agressziós ürügyként való használatára” [20th- and 21st-Century European Examples of Using the Nationality Question and Perceived State Security Concerns as Pretexts for Aggression], in *Határ/Helyzetek II. Kutatóműhelyi tanulmányok*, eds. Andrea Miklósné Zakar and Krisztián Manzinger (Budapest: Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, Állam- és Jogi Tudományi Kar, 2024), 139–172.

Theoretical level

Since the change of regime, Hungary, as a kin-state, has made it a clear goal to support the strengthening of ties between members of the nation, the unity of Hungarians living within and outside its borders, and their mutual responsibility towards each other. Prime Minister József Antall's famous statement about representing "15 million Hungarians in spirit" was a political declaration of the nation's approach. The main goal at that time was to ensure the survival of Hungarian communities beyond the borders, primarily through international minority protection measures. Hungarian politics at that time, while still institutionally in its infancy, was characterized by a strong international orientation, with the Council of Europe, the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and bilateral treaties forming the framework for political action.

On July 5, 1996, in Budapest, representatives of Hungarian parliamentary parties and Hungarian interest groups abroad met at an event organized by the Prime Minister's Office and the Office for Hungarians Abroad titled *Hungary and Hungarians Beyond its Borders* to exchange views on the political framework of the Hungarian state and Hungarian minorities abroad. Referring to the responsibility clause, they stated that in order to more effectively assert the nation's interests in bilateral inter-state relations, it is necessary to establish the fullest possible political agreement between Hungarian political parties, the Hungarian government, and the political organizations of Hungarian communities beyond the border. They also reached a consensus on the principle that the priorities of Hungarian policy regarding Hungarians living beyond the borders (i.e., preserving their identity, continuing to exist as a community, and remaining in their homeland) can be ensured through self-government and autonomy. They also emphasized that while Euro-Atlantic integration is a priority of Hungary's foreign policy, it must not overshadow the fundamental interests of Hungarian national communities beyond the border. At the same time, Hungary supports the Euro-Atlantic integration efforts of neighboring states, in the belief that this will improve the situation of Hungarian national minorities living in those countries. For the first time, they declared that the Hungarian government and political parties in Hungary consider legitimate Hungarian organizations beyond the border to be partners. Equally important was the commitment of Hungarian parliamentary parties to consult with Hungarian political organizations beyond the border when drafting laws concerning these communities.

Kin-state policy first became a coherent strategic area during the debates surrounding the Hungarian Status Law. The establishment of contractual relations with Hungarian organizations abroad and the formalization of support for the community institutional system

began. At the same time, political and diplomatic debates intensified around proposals concerning the status of Hungarians abroad.

The Hungarian Standing Conference was established in 1999, and since then the conference's closing statements have formed the basis for thinking about the Hungarian nation as a whole. After the change of government in 2010, the declaration of national unity rose to an even higher constitutional and legal level. Article 3 of Act XLV of 2010 on the Declaration of National Unity states:

All members and communities of the Hungarian people living under the jurisdiction of several states are part of the unified Hungarian nation, whose unity across state borders is a reality and, at the same time, a defining element of the personal and communal identity of Hungarians.²

The objectives of the kin-state policy that unfolded after 2010 are set out in the Hungarian kin-state policy strategy, which was published in 2011, adopted by the above-mentioned Standing Conference, and expanded in 2013. The framework of the kin-state policy strategy is summarized in the framework document³ and the *Hungarian Diaspora Policy. Strategic Directions*,⁴ published in 2016.

Constitutional level

The theoretical basis for relations with co-nationals living abroad is laid down in national constitutions, and in Hungary's case in, the Fundamental Law. This theoretical declaration has practical consequences, and the specific nature of these consequences depends on the precision of the wording. While the earlier "feels responsibility" statement was more of a declaration of principle (which, together with József Antall's statement about 15 million Hungarians in the early 1990s, was considered a milestone), the Fundamental Law sets more specific tasks for the Hungarian government of the day.

Following the constitutional amendment of 1989, the Hungarian Fundamental Law stated: "The Republic of Hungary feels responsible for the fate of Hungarians living outside

2 Act XLV of 2010 on the Declaration of National Cohesion. http://bgazrt.hu/_files/NPKI/Jogszab%C3%A1ly/Nemzeti_osszetartozas_torveny.pdf

3 *Magyar nemzetpolitika. A nemzetpolitikai stratégia kerete* [Policy for Hungarian Communities Abroad. Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad], available at <https://bgazrt.hu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/02-Magyar-Nemzetpolitika-A-nemzetpolitikai-strat%C3%A9gia-kerete-2.pdf>; accessed 25 November, 2025.

4 *Magyar diaszpórapolitika. Stratégiai irányok* [Hungarian Diaspora Policy. Strategic Directions], available at <https://bgazrt.hu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/02-Magyar-Nemzetpolitika-A-nemzetpolitikai-strat%C3%A9gia-kerete-2.pdf>; accessed 25 November, 2025

its borders and promotes the cultivation of their relationship with Hungary.” This constitutional obligation to maintain contact with and take responsibility for Hungarians living outside the borders of the Hungarian state opened a new chapter in the relationship between the kin-state and Hungarians living abroad. This responsibility is formulated in the Fundamental Law (2011) as follows:

Hungary, bearing in mind the unity of the Hungarian nation, bears responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living outside its borders, promotes the preservation and development of their communities, supports their efforts to preserve their Hungarian identity, the enforcement of their individual and community rights, the establishment of their community self-governments, their prosperity in their homeland, and promotes their cooperation with each other and with Hungary.⁵

The status law and the referendum on dual citizenship contributed significantly to the crystallization of various kin-state policy concepts and the clarification of positions.

The Citizenship Act

The issue of citizenship is central to Hungarian–Hungarian relations, although it was only occasionally debated before 2004. After the change of regime, Hungarians living abroad could only apply for Hungarian citizenship after settling in Hungary. Although there were public debates in the early 1990s about granting dual citizenship to Hungarians living beyond the borders, only the World Federation of Hungarians raised this issue in earnest. It first issued a recommendation on the extension of Hungarian citizenship in 1996 and subsequently promoted this idea with increasing intensity both in Hungary and abroad. The issue eventually came to the fore in public life when, in 1999, the *Hungarian Minority* magazine devoted a special issue to the topic.⁶

Subsequently, the World Federation of Hungarians drafted a bill on foreign citizenship,⁷ which it essentially recommended in place of the draft Hungarian Status Law, and forwarded it to the highest public authorities of the Hungarian state. Later, after the turn

5 For a critical analysis of the issue, see: Balázs Majtényi, “Alaptörvény a nemzet akaratából” [The Fundamental Law by the Will of the Nation], *Állam- és jogtudomány* 55, no. 1. (2014): 77–96; Iván Halász, “A magyar politikai közösség jogi újragondolása 2012 után: kiindulópontok, eszközök, dilemmák és veszélyek” [Rethinking the Legal Framework of the Hungarian Political Community after 2012: Starting Points, Tools, Dilemmas, and Risks], *Kisebbségkutatás* 22, no. 3 (2013): 152–177.

6 *Magyar Kisebbség* [Hungarian Minority], no. 2–3 (1999), Sándor Tamás’s discussion paper appeared in issue no. 1 of 1999.

7 Draft proposal for the establishment of the legal institution of Hungarian citizenship for Hungarians living abroad, see: Zoltán Kántor, ed., *A státustörvény: dokumentumok, tanulmányok, publicisztika* [The Status Law: Documents, Studies, and Journalism] (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2002), 38–44.

of the millennium, the issue was raised again. In August 2003, the World Federation of Hungarians initiated a referendum on extending citizenship to Hungarians living beyond the borders through preferential naturalization. After a lengthy political and legal debate, the President of the Republic of Hungary scheduled the referendum for December 5, 2004.⁸

The political debate surrounding the Hungarian Status Law adopted in 2001, followed by its rejection by left-wing governments after 2002, pushed the idea of dual citizenship into the background until 2010. During this period, as in the 1990s, citizenship could be obtained if someone moved to Hungary, lived and worked there, and had a place of residence, all of which had to be documented.

After the change of government in 2010, there was a conceptual change in approach and implementation. The 2010 amendments to the Act on Hungarian Citizenship and the Hungarian Status Law,⁹ as well as the 2011 extension of voting rights to Hungarian citizens living abroad, strengthened the ties between the Hungarian state and Hungarians living abroad, both in neighboring countries and in the diaspora. These measures transformed previously existing cultural ties into a public law relationship.

The primary goal of extending citizenship, as well as the Hungarian state's kin-state policy, is to strengthen and support the self-organization and community building of Hungarians living abroad. From this perspective, the extension of citizenship—in terms of the number of applications and its impact on community building—has achieved the objectives set out in the amendment to the Citizenship Act. The extension of Hungarian citizenship through simplified naturalization has been positively received by Hungarians living abroad, and the number of applicants and the continuity of applications indicate that Hungarian citizenship is important to Hungarians living abroad, regardless of their motivation for applying.¹⁰

Voting rights

During the political changes of 1989–1990, several European countries ensured the restoration of citizenship, guaranteed the acquisition of citizenship without relocation, and granted voting rights to citizens living abroad. Hungarian practice differed from this approach:

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- 8 The referendum initiated by the Workers' Party on the support or rejection of hospital privatization was also scheduled by the head of state for December 5, 2004. The parties in favor of dual citizenship expected that, with a high turnout among those opposed to hospital privatization, the referendum on dual citizenship would also be successful.
- 9 On the regulation of citizenship, see: Judit Tóth, "A honosítás jogintézményének alakulása az elmúlt húsz évben," [The Development of the Legal Institution of Naturalization over the Past Twenty Years], *Regio* 22, no. 1 (2014): 74–90.
- 10 By 2025, the number of applicants had risen to around 1.15 million.

following the regime change, citizens living abroad were able to vote only at embassies and consulates or in Hungary, and only if they possessed a Hungarian residence card.

The Act on the Elections of Members of Parliament of Hungary (2011), departing from previous practice, granted voting rights to those who did not hold a Hungarian residence card. However, affected individuals could only vote for the national party list and not for individual candidates, and they had to register in advance with the National Election Office in order to vote. Preferential naturalization also helped ensure that more Hungarians living abroad were included on the Fidesz–KDNP list, and some won seats in the 2014 European Parliament elections.¹¹ In this election, Hungarian citizens in Vojvodina (and, in principle, in Transcarpathia) could also vote for Hungarian party lists. Through the extension of voting rights, Hungarians living abroad can influence the results of the Hungarian parliamentary elections, albeit to a limited extent. Experience to date indicates that over 90% of them vote for Fidesz–KDNP candidates.

The question of the nation

Hungarian political groups abroad and the Hungarian state pursue the same goal: they want to create the conditions for the survival and growth of Hungarian communities abroad. The three priorities of Hungarian foreign policy formulated after the change of regime—namely, Euro-Atlantic integration, good neighborly relations, and support for Hungarian minorities beyond the borders—by definition implicate the questions of nationhood: Euro-Atlantic integration indirectly and relations with neighboring countries and support for Hungarians beyond the borders directly. Ethnic organizations—as the legitimate representatives of Hungarians living abroad—and the Hungarian state, in its Fundamental Law¹² as well as in kin-state policy strategy documents and the declarations of Hungarian–Hungarian forums, all identify the preservation and strengthening of Hungarian identity as their main goal.¹³

Since the Treaty of Trianon, Hungarians living abroad have considered themselves members of the Hungarian nation, regardless of whether they have Hungarian citizenship or not. Hungarian citizenship strengthens this sense of belonging, both symbolically and in

11 Gergely Illyés and Krisztián Rákóczi, “Európai parlamenti választások a Kárpát-medencében – magyar szempontból” [European Parliamentary Elections in the Carpathian Basin: A Hungarian Perspective], *Kisebbségkutatás* 23, no. 2 (2014): 20–33.

12 For a detailed analysis of the issue, see: András Varga Zs., “Szuverenitás, identitás és autonómiák a magyar közjogban” [Sovereignty, Identity, and Autonomies in Hungarian Public Law], *Kisebbségvédelem* 1, no. 1 (2019): 41–67.

13 This is essentially what is expressed by the terms “unified Hungarian nation,” “pan-Hungarian nation,” and “cross-border national unification.”

practice. It is not compulsory to acquire Hungarian citizenship or to vote in Hungarian elections. At the same time, from the perspective of the Hungarian state, it is welcomed when Hungarians living abroad, where permitted by their country of residence, can express their opinion on the government's kin-state policy and their preferences regarding the kin-state policy of the next government cycle through voting.

Level of public administration

Care for co-nationals living abroad is present in the governmental programs and structures of many countries. The specific arrangements vary: in some countries, the department or office responsible for co-nationals living abroad belongs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in others to the parliament, and in others to the presidential office. In Hungary, after the change of regime, the Secretariat for Hungarians Abroad was established within the Prime Minister's Office in 1990. Two years later, it was transformed into the Governmental Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad with national jurisdiction and placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During the Horn government (1994–1998), the above-mentioned Governmental Office was returned to the supervision of the Prime Minister's Office, and then from 1998, during the years of the first Orbán government (1998–2002), it was again placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2002, following the inauguration of the Medgyessy government, the Governmental Office was once again placed under the Prime Minister's Office (2002–2004), and finally, in 2006, the office was abolished as part of the administrative reform carried out during the premiership of Ferenc Gyurcsány (2004–2009). From 2007 until the 2010 elections, issues relating to Hungarians living abroad were handled by the Department of Kin-State Policy within the State Secretariat for Foreign Relations and Kin-State Policy Affairs of the Prime Minister's Office.

A significant change came after the 2010 elections with the establishment of a system of top-level ministries, in which the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad, established within the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice, became responsible for Hungarians living abroad. This change elevated the issue of Hungarians living abroad to the same level as any other sectoral policy. In addition, since 2010, the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for kin-state policy has also been responsible for this sector. Following the 2014 elections, the State Secretariat was transferred to the Prime Minister's Office, and the field is now managed by a state secretary. The unit is now called the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad.

As the legal successor to the Szülőföld Fund, which previously managed Hungarian support for Hungarians living beyond the borders, the Bethlen Gábor Fund was established in 2011 with the threefold task of disbursing support, operating the House of Hungarians, and overseeing the Research Institute for Hungarian Communities Abroad. The aim of the reorganization of the support policy was to transfer the previous multi-centered, opaque cash flows to a centralized, simple, and transparent system. The funds are managed by a non-profit called Bethlen Gábor Fund Management Ltd.

Diaspora policy

Before the change of regime, the Hungarian diaspora was understood primarily in terms of “emigration” and “emigrants.” This primarily referred to those who left in 1956 and those who left the country during the era of state socialism. In the years following the change of regime, contact with these groups was established, often on the initiative of those who had emigrated. The first working group dealing with the diaspora was formed within the framework of the World Federation of Hungarians, on the initiative of members of the diaspora. Later, they were invited to the Hungarian Standing Conference; however, it was not until the formation of the 2010 government that relations between the Hungarian state and Hungarian diaspora were institutionalized, on the initiative of Zsuzsanna Répás, then Deputy State Secretary.

The Hungarian Diaspora Council, which is currently in operation, serves as a joint forum for Hungarian organizations around the world, taking into account the specific needs and interests of those living in the diaspora and providing them with independent representation.¹⁴ The Hungarian Diaspora Council works in close cooperation with the Hungarian Standing Conference. Since 2012, contact with the diaspora has intensified, taking the form of meetings of Hungarian weekend schools, the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program, and the Mikes Kelemen Program, as well as numerous other grants and forms of support.¹⁵

14 The first meeting took place on November 17, 2011.

15 For further information on the Hungarian diaspora and Hungary’s diaspora engagement practices, see: Dániel Gazsó, *Ottthon és itthon. A magyar diaszpóra és anyaországa* [At Home Both Here and There. The Hungarian Diaspora and Its Kin-State] (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2022); Dániel Gazsó, “A diaszpóra politikai dimenziói” [The Political Dimensions of Diaspora], *Politikatudományi Szemle* 29, no. 2 (2020): 47–68; Dániel Gazsó, “A magyar diaszpóra intézményesülésének és anyaországi viszonyainak története” [The Institutionalization of the Hungarian Diaspora and Its Relations with the Kin-State], in *Amerikai magyarok – magyar amerikaiak. Új irányok a közös történelem kutatásában*, eds. László Ambrus and Eszter Rakita (Eger: Líceum Kiadó, 2019), 15–33; Dániel Gazsó, “A Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program ösztöndíjasainak tevékenységei” [Activities of the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program Fellows], *Kisebbségi Szemle* 3, no. 3 (2018): 103–116.

Support policy

In one form or another, every Central and Eastern European country supports the preservation of the identity of its co-nationals living abroad. In Hungary's case, support was very sporadic in the early 1990s, and the support system for co-nationals was only developed later in government departments. In 2010, the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad took over the subsidies, with Bethlen Gábor Fund Management Ltd. acting as the administrator. The unified subsidy system was diversified under subsequent Fidesz–KDNP governments, with other ministries also becoming involved in the disbursement of funds.

The support policy expanded significantly: institutional developments, church and media support, and economic development programs contributed to the strengthening of communities abroad. Economic support introduced a new logic by linking community survival with local prosperity. Hungarian state subsidies now reach virtually all settlements, clusters, and scattered communities inhabited by Hungarians abroad. Support can be provided either through social organizations, kindergartens, schools, or church communities, or directly to families living in the settlements. Educational support is provided as a means of promoting enrollment in Hungarian-language schools. The subsidies do not differentiate between families belonging to the Hungarian minority, the majority, or other nationalities; eligibility is based solely on whether a child attends a Hungarian-language school. The same principle applies to the school enrollment subsidies offered by the Rákóczi Association. On this basis, the families of approximately 240,000 children living abroad and enrolled in Hungarian-language schools receive support in the form of 100,000 HUF per year (as of 2025).

At the suggestion of Hungarian communities abroad, the Hungarian kin-state policy institutional system decides on the list of Institutions of National Importance and Programs of National Importance and their subsidies. In addition to these, approximately 5,000 Hungarian social organizations have won tenders to date. The purchase, renovation (e.g., of churches, university buildings, and sports facilities), and construction of buildings serve to increase the assets of Hungarian communities abroad and, at the same time, to ensure the activities of Hungarian organizations abroad. Through this support, the Hungarian state essentially provides (additional) community spaces for Hungarians living abroad. Their significance can be clearly seen in the following non-exhaustive list:

- *Developments linked to thematic years.* Since 2012, the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad has announced an annual thematic year, focusing on a specific target group or topic for kin-state policy support. Between 2012 and 2014, the focus was on educational development, between 2015 and 2017 on

economic development, between 2018 and 2019 on family support, and from 2020 onwards on strengthening communities. In addition to providing support, raising awareness of the theme is also a key objective of the thematic years (e.g., the Year of Hungarian Kindergartens Abroad, the Year of Young Hungarian Entrepreneurs Abroad, and the Year of Hungarian Families Abroad).

- *Carpathian Basin Kindergarten Development Program.* Launched at the end of 2016, the program aims to strengthen the network of Hungarian-language kindergartens and nurseries beyond the border, thereby increasing the likelihood that a Hungarian-language school will be chosen at a later stage. Several hundred new institutions have been built or renovated as part of the program.
- *Support program for Hungarian entrepreneurs abroad.* In 2016, the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad launched a program to support Hungarian entrepreneurs abroad, with the aim of strengthening the Hungarian economic community in the Carpathian Basin. The initiative has so far reached more than 3,000 entrepreneurs, who provide jobs for a total of 12,000–15,000 people. The program contributes to the economic development of regions outside Hungary and to strengthening cooperation and knowledge sharing among Hungarian businesses. The Carpathian Basin Hungarian Entrepreneurs' Meeting offers an annual opportunity for networking and the exchange of experiences, while the Mentor Program has, since 2019, supported young and start-up entrepreneurs with the involvement of locally established business leaders. The common goal of these initiatives is to make Hungarian businesses abroad more competitive and cooperative in the long term, strengthening Hungary's economic presence in the Carpathian Basin.
- *Petőfi Sándor Program.* Modelled on the Kőrösi Sándor Csoma Program, the Petőfi Sándor Program was established in 2015 with the aim of supporting Hungarians living in dispersed communities in the countries of the Carpathian Basin.
- *Carpathian Basin Sister City Program.* Since 2015, the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad has announced an annual call for proposals to support the establishment and strengthening of sister city relationships between municipalities in Hungary and those beyond its borders. Through these partnerships, the program fosters personal and community-level connections that contribute to a broader sense of national unity across the Carpathian Basin. Thanks to the calls for proposals announced to date, more than 1,000 partnerships have been established or renewed in recent years.

- *Boundless! Program.* Launched in 2011, the program aims to enable young people enrolled in Hungarian public education to visit Hungarian-populated areas in neighboring countries at least once with state support, while also bringing as many Hungarian students from abroad as possible to Hungary through exchange programs.

Summary

Majority and minority societies, nation states, and kin-states in Europe all attach importance to national identity and legitimize community aspirations on this basis. Nationalism, as a neutral social science concept, refers to the institutionalization of majority and minority societies on a national basis.

The basic principles of Hungarian kin-state policy were formulated during the transition to democracy, in line with the objectives of Hungarian interest groups abroad. At their core, these principles seek to strengthen Hungarian communities abroad through the creation of a legal framework for the protection of minorities, the development of institutions that reproduces identity, and the maintenance of contact with the kin-state. Kin-state policy can be defined as follows:

Kin-state policy is the policy of the Hungarian state towards Hungarians living abroad—in neighbouring countries and other countries around the world—which strengthens the relationship between the Hungarian state and Hungarian individuals and communities abroad with the aim of promoting the prosperity of the unified Hungarian nation and preserving the identity of Hungarian communities abroad and to pass on Hungarian identity.¹⁶

We can examine kin-state policy at several levels: legislation; the institutionalization of relations between the kin-state and its co-nationals abroad; public administration; financing; and support programs.

There is no reason to assume that the importance of the nation or national identity will fade into the background or disappear. On the contrary, current events (not least the intensification of migration processes) are prompting states to preserve and rethink their national character and culture. Nation states are focusing on protecting and reproducing the majority culture, national minorities are organizing themselves to protect their identity,

16 Zoltán Kántor, ed., *Nemzetpolitikai alapismeretek. Közzolgálati tisztviselők számára* [Fundamentals of Kin-State Policy: For Public Servants] (Budapest: Nemzeti Közzolgálati és Tankönyv Kiadó Zrt., 2013).

and the kin-state activism is intensifying towards their co-nationals living in neighboring states and towards old and new diasporas.

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