

# Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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## Prime Minister Viktor Orbán stands up for the autonomy of Hungarians in Transcarpathia

Reinforcing his announcement made on Thursday at the Central European security forum Globsec, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán again stood up for the autonomy of Hungarians in Transcarpathia. The Prime Minister said that “Ukraine can be neither stable nor democratic if it fails to grant local minorities and ethnic communities – including Hungarians – what they are entitled to. That is dual citizenship, collective or community rights and autonomy.”

Mr. Orbán said that there were several legal solutions to granting autonomy in Europe, and “In the wide and colorful world of choice in autonomy, Hungarians in Transcarpathia can decide which particular legal institution they prefer.” The Prime Minister added that “whatever they choose, both Hungarian communities and the Ukrainian authorities must realize that the Hungarian state throws its full weight behind support for the autonomy demands of Transcarpathian Hungarians.”

Foreign Minister János Martonyi said that the Prime Minister’s statements on autonomy included no new elements compared to the related policies of Hungarian governments over the past 25 years. In its latest analysis dealing with the issue, the Research Institute for Hungarian Communities Abroad stated that since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis Hungary has supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the country has not changed its standpoint. Before the formation of every new government in Hungary, the prime minister of the day sends a message to Hungarian communities living abroad. In this case the message confirms continuation of the same policy for Hungarian communities abroad.



## Zsolt Semjén: The RMDSZ’s electoral success is in the national interest

In an interview on Transylvanian Hungarian Television (ETV), Deputy Prime Minister for Hungarian Communities Abroad and President of the Christian Democratic People’s Party (KDNP) Zsolt Semjén said that it is in the interest of the Hungarian nation that the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) fares as well as possible in the European Parliament elections. On behalf of the Hungarian government, he asked all ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania to go to the polls on May 25 and vote for the RMDSZ list. The Deputy Prime Minister said that the RMDSZ is able to represent Hungarian interests, adding that the European Union should not simply be tolerated but shaped, and therefore it is very important that members of Hungarian communities abroad are represented in the European Parliament to the greatest extent possible. Mr. Semjén stressed the need to effectively represent the interests of the Hungarian nation in the European Parliament, and to push the European Union towards the values of Christian civilization.

At a press conference held in the Bihar megye/Județul Bihor center of the RMDSZ on Sunday, President of the RMDSZ, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Culture Hunor Kelemen said that “We have to show the strength of our community in order to make the Hungarian issue important in Europe with the help of our representatives.” The



head of the RMDSZ said that the experience of the past 3 weeks in the election campaign has shown that confidence in European institutions has grown among Hungarians in Transylvania.

### Băsescu: there are no parallels between Ukraine and Szeklerland

President of Romania Traian Băsescu has said that no parallels can be drawn between the situation in Ukraine and the aspirations of Hungarians in Romania to achieve territorial autonomy. The President talked about this issue at a forum in Iași organized by the People's Movement Foundation on the subject of Romania's European Union priorities. Answering questions from the audience, the President said that official discourse in Bucharest is focused on association within the EU, and the question of autonomy in Szeklerland does not arise. Mr. Băsescu added that in both Ukraine and in former Yugoslavia it was nationalism and corruption that had led to war. "There is no connection between the rapprochement involving the Republic of Moldova and Romania, and certain separatist demands. President Băsescu told the news agency Agerpres that he often makes visits to Hargita megye/Județul Harghita and Kovászna megye/Județul Covasna and sees that people living there do not want any conflict, separatism or isolation. He said: "This is only the viewpoint of politicians. I am not alarmed at this, even though the manner in which Hungarians in Romania celebrate their national holidays is often disturbing for us."

### Autonomy with the strength of the community

President of the Hungarian People's Party of Transylvania (EMNP) Tibor T. Toró has said in Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc that the factors which can contribute to the practical realization of the Hungarian community's autonomy in Transylvania are a Hungarian community which is discovering its strength, the balance of power among Transylvanian Hungarian political parties and Hungary's policy for Hungarian communities abroad. At a meeting of the "autonomy caravan" in Csíkszereda organized by the EMNP, the party leader introduced the operation of an administrative system built on self-determination which could be viable in a federal Romania. He said that it had become clear in 2003 that there are two possible paths open to the Hungarian community in Transylvania: to integrate into the governing power or to "bring home" spheres of authority. He added that this fault line has been with Hungarians for several hundred years and the Trianon Peace Treaty of 1920 had not affected it. The reason for the creation of the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania (EMNT) was to provide a "host" and leader for the autonomy question, and this question is still on the agenda of the organization.

On Friday the draft autonomy paper of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) was also made public and it became clear that the document concerns not the historic area of Szeklerland, but the counties of Hargita/Județul Harghita, Kovászna/Județul Covasna and Maros/Județul Mureș, which include not only Szeklerland but also other territories. The RMDSZ proposes to establish an associated region of these three counties and to give them a "special status".



### Prime Minister Viktor Orbán holds talks with leaders of the MKP

Unresolved minority issues in Hungarian-Slovak relations, European Parliament elections and other topical issues were discussed by the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the leader of Slovakia's Party of the Hungarian Community (MKP) József Berényi and the MKP's top EP candidate Pál Csáky in Bratislava/Pozsony on Thursday. The parties discussed the MKP's draft autonomy paper, which has not yet been made public because of the Slovakian presidential election which was held in March and the approaching EP election scheduled for 25 May.



### Charter of Vojvodina adopted

On Wednesday the House of Representatives of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina adopted a proposal for the province's new charter; this has been sent to the Serbian parliament. One hundred and twenty representatives were present when the proposal was adopted, with 99 votes in favor and 6 votes against. Members of the Serbian Democratic Party (DSS) and those of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) voted against the proposal, while members of the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (LSV) did not participate in the vote. The Serbian parliament will discuss the proposal at an extraordinary meeting on Monday, after which the proposal will be returned to the province's House of Representatives for publication.

### István Pásztor: Serbia-Hungary relations are excellent

Talking about relations between Budapest and Belgrade in an interview with the Serbian weekly Nedeljnik, the head of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) István Pásztor said that Serbia-Hungary relations are excellent in all aspects, and that there are no unresolved questions which could appear in a "negative context" between the two countries in the near future. The head of the VMSZ added that negotiations on Serbia's accession to the European Union may further develop this relationship. Mr. Pásztor also announced that the two countries are expected to hold a joint government session before the summer recess (but not later than autumn), at which – in addition to political questions – they will discuss the development of transport, i.e. the rail link between Budapest and Belgrade.





## 2,500 conscripts from Transcarpathia to be recruited to the army of Ukraine

Referring to a statement by Transcarpathia's Military Reserves Center, the newspapers Kárpáti Igaz Szó and Kárpátalja wrote in their Saturday editions that almost 2,500 young men eligible for conscription and reserve officers from Transcarpathia will be recruited to the Ukrainian army during a spring recruitment drive, between May and July. On Friday the Commander of Transcarpathia's Military Reserves Center Colonel Ivan Vasilcjun announced that the Ukrainian government is planning to increase military numbers from 25,000 to 250,000 within a short period. The draft will apply to every man between the ages of 18 and 25 and those reserve officers under the age of 35 who received military training during their university studies and obtained the rank of officer.