

Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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Zsolt Semjén: Kőrösi Csoma Program is a “huge success”

Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Hungarian communities abroad Zsolt Semjén has said that the Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program which helps Hungarian communities around the world maintain their Hungarian identity has been a “huge success”. Speaking at the closing conference of this year’s program, the Deputy Prime Minister said that the work that the young people participating in the program had done in Hungarian diaspora communities is imperishable and of historic importance. He emphasized that the permanence of Hungarian communities living in diaspora can be attained if – besides strengthening their cultural and language identity – they are encouraged to assume Hungarian citizenship, since this is an effective way of halting or even reversing their assimilation. Mr. Semjén said that the Hungarian government would provide the financial resources necessary for continuation of the program, adding that the Government has earmarked 1 billion forints (EUR 32.5m) for the Kőrösi Csoma Program and another 500 million forints for the Mikes program, aimed at preserving the material heritage of diaspora Hungarians. State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi said that in 2013 47 young people had an opportunity to travel to Hungarian communities living in diaspora, while in 2014 this number was increased to 100. He added that next year a further 100 young people would take part in the program.

The aim of the Kőrösi Csoma Program is to strengthen relations between Hungary and Hungarians living in diaspora. Within the framework of the program, Hungary sends interns to the Diaspora to aid Hungarian communities with the preservation of various levels of Hungarian culture, including language, scouting, literature, and fostering Hungarian organizations’ ties to the motherland.

The Forum of Hungarian Representatives of the Carpathian Basin holds its session

Speaking at the meeting of the Forum of Hungarian Representatives of the Carpathian Basin (KMKF) in Parliament, House Speaker László Kövér said that in the coming years there might be a chance for people to be above all Hungarians in terms of basic national issues, with political affiliation – being right-wing, left-wing, conservative or liberal – only being secondary. The House Speaker emphasized that if this was realized everyone would be a winner, both in Hungary and beyond its borders. He added that over the past 25 years, Hungary’s policy for Hungarian communities abroad has developed a significant competitive advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is that it is predictable, while the disadvantage is that it has not been supported by a full national consensus among representatives of Hungarian political life. He added that the coming year might provide an opportunity to increase this advantage and decrease the disadvantage.

In the closing declaration adopted at the meeting, the KMKF stated that the participation of Hungarians abroad in Hungary’s elections had been successful, and condemned the violations committed against Hungarians in Transylvania. The KMKF



also proposed declaring 15 November – the birthday of Prince of Transylvania Gábor Bethlen – the Day of the Hungarian Diaspora.

A decision in the SZNT's lawsuit is expected to be made next year

At a press conference held on Thursday, the representatives of the Szekler National Council (SZNT) announced that in the first half of 2015 a decision is expected to be made in the lawsuit launched by the SZNT at the Court of Justice of the European Union because of the rejection of its citizens' initiative on the "The Europe of regions". The initiative of the SZNT and its partners calls on the European Union to pay particular attention to those regions which are different from their neighboring regions in their national, ethnic, cultural and linguistic peculiarities. The European Commission rejected the initiative, stating that it did not belong to its sphere of competence. As a reaction to this decision, the SZNT launched a lawsuit. State Secretary at the Ministry of Human Capacities Bence Rétvári said that the Hungarian government hopes that the SZNT's initiative is successful, recalling that Hungary had provided all the support possible when it had intervened in the lawsuit, and would further support the initiative.

The concept of permanence, prosperity and convergence

On Monday the Party of the Hungarian Community (MKP) made public its document entitled "The institutional conditions of the permanence and prosperity of the Hungarian community in Slovakia and the economic convergence of Southern Slovakia". On the same day the party also released its document for public debate. In the 70-page document, the MKP proposes the simultaneous implementation of two local governmental models. It suggests the adoption of an Act which would make possible the establishment of minority local governments in towns where the ratio of a given national minority is below 50 percent. This local government would exercise rights in the field of minority education, culture and language use. Towns in which members of a national minority form more than 50 percent of the population would also have competence in the field of territorial regional development, beyond exercising rights in the field of education, culture and language use.

On Wednesday the Hungarian People's Party of Transylvania (EMNP) welcomed the MKP's draft on minority local government models and encouraged Hungarians in Slovakia to persevere in their endeavors for autonomy.

A ministerial decree would make possible the regaining of Slovak citizenship

Slovakia's Minister of the Interior Robert Kaliňák would not wait until the adoption of a proposal aimed at moderating Slovakia's Act on Citizenship prepared by the



Ministry of the Interior; he would instead use a ministerial decree to restore Slovak citizenship to those who lost it as a result of the 2010 Act. The Minister announced that “People who have lost their citizenship as a result of acquiring the citizenship of another country may regain their Slovak citizenship if their application is adopted and evaluated positively, and “if this serves the interests of the Slovakian Republic.” This planned amendment of the Slovak Citizenship Act would bring no changes for Hungarians living in Slovakia who have lost their Slovak citizenship as a result of becoming Hungarian citizens.

The current form of Slovakia’s Act on Citizenship was adopted in 2010 as a reaction to the simplified naturalization procedure adopted by Hungary in the same year. As a result of the Act, almost 900 people have lost their Slovakian citizenship so far.



Vojvodina Pilgrimage: Requiem in St. Stephen’s Basilica

At the weekend the “Keskenyúton” foundation organized an event which had the motto “Those for whom the bell did not toll”: the title of a book by the Hungarian author Sándor Illés, who was born 100 years ago in Serbia’s Temerin. The first Requiem Mass in St. Stephen’s Basilica to the memory of the innocent victims of the Vojvodina events of 1944–45 was held 13 years ago. In the course of the intervening years this program has been expanded, and the number of participating pilgrims from Vojvodina has increased. The pilgrims taking part in the program were survivors and witnesses of the 1944–45 events, as well as relatives of the victims. This year almost 300 pilgrims arrived from Bezdán/Bezdan, Temerin/Temerin, Óbecse/ Opština Bečej, Topolya/ Bačka Topola, Verbász/Vrbas and other towns in Vojvodina. On Sunday morning they visited the Hungarian Parliament, where they were received by the Vice-President of the Parliament Gergely Gulyás.



Exhibition in the European Parliament on the 70th anniversary of the deportation of Transcarpathian Hungarians

An exhibition entitled “Malenkij Robot” was opened on Tuesday in the European Parliament in Brussels to mark the 70th anniversary of the deportation of Transcarpathian Hungarians. The exhibition was initiated by Andrea Bocskor, who is a Fidesz Member of the European Parliament, representing Transcarpathia.

According to data from the 1941 census, 233,840 Hungarians were living in Transcarpathia that year, which had been temporarily restored to Hungary as a result of the First Vienna Award in 1938. At the end of the Second World War, when the Soviet Army occupied the area, deportations started to take place. Hungarian and German men between the ages of 18 and 50 were collectively declared “war criminals”, and were deported to Soviet labor camps. This policy was called “malenkij robot” which means “Little Work” in Russian, since the deported people were told that they would have to do only a “little work.”