

Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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PRIME MINISTERS OFFICE
STATE SECRETARIAT FOR HUNGARIAN
COMMUNITIES ABROAD

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Conference on language rights held in Budapest

At a conference entitled language (use) in practice held in Budapest on Thursday, the director of the Research Institute for Hungarian Communities Abroad Zoltán Kántor said that the permanence of the Hungarian language depends on its everyday use. The director stressed that language is not just an important element of identity, but also that of autonomy, adding that until autonomy can be reached, the free use of the mother tongue is the most important aim. Speaking at the conference, researcher from the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania Tibor T. Toró said that his institution has a project aimed at exploring the situation of language use in Transylvanian towns where the ratio of Hungarians is above the 20 percent threshold. Mr. Toró added that after reviewing the situation at several mayor's offices, Hungarian-language petitions and websites, it can be declared that 44 percent of websites were only in the Romanian language. He added, however, that in towns where the ratio of Hungarians is above fifty percent the members of local governments also speak in Hungarian, and this does not depend on who is mayor.

Cooperation agreement to promote the simplified naturalization procedure in Transylvania is signed

Representatives from the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Eurotrans Foundation signed a cooperation agreement on February 18th aimed at streamlining of the simplified naturalization procedure. According to the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad, the purpose of the trilateral cooperation is to facilitate the availability of a wider range of persons interested in the simplified naturalization procedure, thus diminishing the administrative burdens on the Hungarian community in Romania. A similar agreement already exists with the network of Democracy Centers operated by the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania which was signed in 2010.

Twenty-four pro-autonomy resolutions have been annulled by the court of Hargita

In the county of Hargita/Județul Harghita, 27 local governments have adopted resolutions supporting autonomy, initiated by the Szekler National Council (SZNT). All of the resolutions have been challenged by the prefect of the county at the administrative department of the court, and in 24 cases the court has accepted the prefect's arguments. Three lawsuits are still in progress. According to the prefect's arguments, the administrative region of Szeklerland cannot be established, because the Romanian Constitution only allows for the following administrative units: village, town and county. Concerning language use, the prefect has declared that the Hungarian language cannot receive official status, because Romania's constitution states that "Romanian is the official language in Romania." The prefect added that if further pro-autonomy resolutions are created, he will also challenge them in court.



Due to an initiative by the SZNT, so far 45 municipalities of Kovászna/Covasna, Hargita/Hargitha and Maros/Mureş counties have adopted a resolution in which they declare that they wish to belong to the independent administrative unit of Szeklerland, in which autonomy is guaranteed by law and the Hungarian language has official status alongside Romanian.



Hungarians deprived of their Slovak citizenship turn to the European Court of Human Rights

Having been stripped of her Slovak citizenship, 103-year-old Ilonka Tamás has turned to the European Court of Human Rights, citing “withdrawal of remedy and undermining private life.” In light of her advanced age, Ms. Tamás has requested especially prompt dispatch. Other Hungarians living in Slovakia who have been deprived of their Slovak citizenship – including Erzsébet Dolník, Gyula Kassai, László Gubík and István Fehér – will also turn to the European Court of Human Rights soon. Zoltán Lomniczi, the creator of the petition, said that the main legal argument of the petition sent to the court is the following: as the Constitutional Court did not rule on the issue, Slovakia broke the rule in the European Convention on Human Rights which states that in the event of the withdrawal of a right, the court must ensure the opportunity of remedy for the party in question.

So far more than 900 people have been deprived of their Slovak citizenship under the country’s 2010 Act on Citizenship. Although in February a ministerial decree entered into force which can restore Slovak citizenship to those who lost it as a result of the 2010 law, this means no progress for the Hungarian community in Slovakia, since it restores citizenship only to those who have permanent residency abroad.



MNT to establish centers for dispersed Hungarian communities

The Hungarian National Council (MNT) is planning to establish centers for dispersed Hungarian communities in order to handle the problems of Hungarians living in Vojvodina more effectively. The MNT would restructure the current civil centers into regional institutions which would provide help in the field of education, culture, the organization of community life, EU tenders and rural development. The head of the MNT and the representatives of civil organizations stressed that more attention should be paid to dispersed Hungarian communities.



The Hungarian government supports Hungarian-language vocational education in Transcarpathia

Under the program “2015 – the year of Hungarian vocational education abroad”, representatives of the Hungarian government and leaders of Transcarpathia’s



Hungarian-language educational organizations have signed an agreement in Beregszász/Berehove on the financial support offered by Hungary for the long-term development of Hungarian-language vocational education in Transcarpathia. Speaking at the conference, State Secretary for Hungarian communities abroad Árpád János Potápi said that it is indicative that the opening event of the program “2015 – the year of Hungarian vocational education abroad” was held in Beregszász. He added that this indicates that the Hungarian government pays special attention to the Hungarian community in Transcarpathia – which among Hungarian communities in the Carpathian Basin is the one in the most difficult situation – and strives to support it with all means possible. The state secretary said that the basis for the development of Hungarian vocational education in Transcarpathia already exists, since in September 2014 a vocational institution was opened as part of the Ferenc Rákóczi II. Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute; the establishment of this was financed by the Hungarian Government, and Transcarpathia has a further seven Hungarian-language vocational institutions. Mr. Potápi added that under the agreement on the long-term development of Hungarian-language vocational education in Transcarpathia, the Hungarian Government is allocating HUF 50 million (EUR 163,500) to the development of four Hungarian-language vocational institutions.

Brenzovics: Hungarians in Transcarpathia have an interest in peace and Ukraine’s EU integration

A three-day international conference entitled the 8th Europe-Ukraine Forum has been held in Lodz. The report which was presented on the opening day of the conference states that “Ukraine has paid the highest price for its sovereignty since the declaration of its independence in 1991: the annexation of Crimea, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the difficult macroeconomic situation threaten Ukrainian statehood itself.” The conference was attended by member of the Ukrainian parliament and head of the Cultural Association of Hungarians in Transcarpathia (KMKSZ) László Brenzovics, who said that all the participants at the event declared that their interests lie in a democratic Ukraine which respects the rights of national minorities. He added that peace and Ukraine’s EU integration are also in the interest of Hungarians in Transcarpathia.

