

# Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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COMMUNITIES ABROAD

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## Zsolt Semjén: Everything that takes us closer to achieving autonomy aspirations of Hungarian communities beyond borders is beneficial

Speaking at the presentation of the book *With Rights in Europe* which reviews the autonomy aspirations of Hungarian communities beyond the borders, written by Special Commissioner of the Prime Minister Katalin Szili, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Hungarian communities abroad Zsolt Semjén said that everything that takes us closer to achieving the autonomy aspirations of Hungarian communities beyond the borders is beneficial, and everything that moves us further away from those goals is harmful. The deputy prime minister said that the essence and purpose of Hungary lie in promoting the survival of the Hungarian nation and improving the quality of life for every Hungarian. He added that a pre-condition to achieving this is to help every constituent part of the nation survive, and the survival of the constituent parts of the nation depends on the achievement of autonomy. Mr. Semjén stressed that “if there is autonomy, we shall survive; if there is no autonomy, our survival is questionable”. He added that “the various autonomy concepts cannot be developed in Budapest. Every individual part of the nation must identify its own customized concept or concepts, and these must be represented by legitimate Hungarian organizations.” He pledged that the Hungarian Government will provide all the necessary assistance with this. State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad at the Prime Minister’s Office Árpád János Potápi told the press that the population figures and percentages of the Hungarian community within the Carpathian Basin are decreasing continuously, though the rates of decrease vary. Mr. Potápi said that the Hungarian block community is not decreasing in terms of its percentage, but it is declining in terms of numbers in the Carpathian Basin. At the same time, there is a drastic decline in scattered communities; there are places where this decline reaches 75 to 80 per cent. He added that the goal is to attempt to stop this process in every possible way. Presenting the book, Special Commissioner of the Prime Minister Katalin Szili said that it took them a year to complete the publication which reviews the autonomy aspirations of the past 25 years and takes stock of the legal frameworks afforded by the European Union. Ms. Szili highlighted: Hungary and the Hungarian nation envisage the implementation of the autonomy concepts within the European boundaries. She added that it is necessary to address the autonomy aspirations of not only those who live in larger blocks, but also those of scattered communities.

## The Mikes Kelemen Program is successful

On Tuesday, speaking at a press conference organized to present the results of the Hungarian Government’s Mikes Kelemen Program, Deputy State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad at the Prime Minister’s Office Péter Szilágyi said that the Mikes Kelemen Program aimed to collect the material heritage of the Hungarian diaspora is successful. The deputy state secretary added that so far 186 m3 of documents has been collected. Mr. Szilágyi stressed that the aim of the program is to collect those documents the owners of which are already unable to take care of them,



or the owners are elderly people or people who do not speak Hungarian. Beside books, the collected documents contain printouts, posters, photographs and voice recordings as well. Out of the 186 m3 of documents, 110 m3 has already been transferred to Hungary, 62 m3 will soon arrive and 14 m3 is still in South America. Mr. Szilágyi added that so far 50,000 pieces of documents have been processed by the staff of the National Széchényi Library. The deputy state secretary recalled that the Hungarian Diaspora Council decided about the launch of the Mikes Kelemen Program at the beginning of 2013, and in fall 2013 the program started in practice. The Hungarian Government allocated HUF 500 million (EUR 1.6 million) for the program, which also includes the establishment of an emigration and diaspora center in the House of Hungarians in Budapest. The press conference was also attended by the director-general of the National Széchény Library (OSZK) László Tüske and director-general of the National Archives of Hungary Zsuzsanna Mikó, who evaluated the results of the program from the point of view of their institutions.



### The Mikó case has reached a new phase

At a press conference held in Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca on Wednesday, the legal representative of the Transylvanian Reformed Church Emőd Veress announced that the Romanian restitution committee will examine again the request of the Transylvanian Reformed Church District concerning the restitution of the Székely Mikó High School of Sepsiszentgyörgy/Sfântu Gheorghe. He added that the representatives of the church have to appear in front of the committee on Thursday in order to confirm their request. Mr. Veress said that the committee found that the former criminal proceeding did not settle the ownership of the property. In 2014, the Appeal Court of Ploiesti found that the building of the Székely Mikó High School was returned to the church illegally, and sentenced the members of the restitution committee to suspended imprisonment.

### The mayor of Sepsiszentgyörgy can return to his office

According to the decision of the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA), Árpád Antal – who has recently been prohibited from exercising his office – can return to his post as the mayor of Sepsiszentgyörgy/Sfântu Gheorghe. The decision of the DNA was announced by Árpád Antal at the Monday session of the town's council, in which he had planned to prolong the mandate of the deputy mayor of the town who has replaced him in the recent period. Mr. Antal said that although he is allowed to exercise his office, the other conditions of the judicial oversight he is a subject to are still in force. He also announced that the decision of the DNA, however, provides him an opportunity to participate in the municipal elections scheduled to take place in Romania on 5 June. He added that it was good to see that more than 10,000 people signed the forms supporting his participation in the elections for the mayor's post.



## Hungarian future a viable option only through expansion of opportunities of young Hungarians

Speaking in Slovakia's Révkomárom/Komárno at the inauguration of the developments implemented as part of the program "2015 - The Year of Hungarian Vocational Education Abroad", Deputy State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Péter Szilágyi said that "a Hungarian future is only a viable option through the expansion of the opportunities of young Hungarians, and if they have the conditions to earn a decent living." As part of the program, the Révkomárom Industrial Secondary School received 15 million HUF (EUR 48,000) from the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad, while the local Hungarian Language Private Secondary School in Gúta/Kollárovo got HUF 10 million (EUR 32,000) as development aid. Speaking at the event, the deputy state secretary said that the Hungarian Government started the job which is referred to as a "change of paradigm in Hungary's policy for Hungarian communities abroad" a year and a half ago. Mr. Szilágyi highlighted that one of the most important steps of this new direction is to raise awareness that in the interest of promoting the survival of Hungarian communities in the Carpathian Basin, it is no longer sufficient to merely sponsor and support education and culture which serve as a means to reinforce Hungarian identity. Due to the program launched last year with an allocation of HUF 500 million (EUR 1.6 million), educational institutions providing vocational training in Hungarian regions beyond the borders received development grants worth HUF 345 million (EUR 1.1 million) in 2015. Developments were implemented in 12 educational institutions in Slovakia from this allocation, with expenditures of HUF 70.5 million (EUR 227,000) in total.



## The results of early elections in Serbia cause no surprise

Early parliamentary, provincial and municipal elections held in Serbia on Sunday brought no surprise: according to preliminary results, Serbia's governing party, the center-right Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) won the elections, while the "greatest" winner of the elections was the ultranationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) which became stronger, winning the third place among the parties. According to preliminary results, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) won 1.47 percent of the vote. So far, the VMSZ had five representatives in the Serbian Parliament (which has 250 members), but – according to the current results – this number will decrease to four. On Sunday, the president of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians István Pásztor said that the aim of the VMSZ has not changed: it is to be part of the governing coalition again. He added that although his party would not like to play a direct role in the government, it would like to be present at the level of state secretaries.



## Hungarian lingual classrooms supported by the kin-state inaugurated in Ungvár

On Monday, government commissioner István Grezsa inaugurated a renovated lingual classroom in Transcarpathia's Ungvár/Uzhhorod in a school which will be the first one in Ukraine to teach Hungarian as a foreign language. The renovation of the classroom was supported by the Hungarian Government. Speaking at the event, the government commissioner stressed that the Hungarian-language poetic-musical show the Ukrainian students performed at the event prove that it was worth to support the idea of teaching Hungarian as a foreign language to Ukrainians living in the region. Mr. Grezsa added that Transcarpathian Ukrainians' knowledge of the Hungarian language will strengthen the friendship between Hungary and Ukraine. The Hungarian Government allocated HUF 3.5 million HUF (EUR 11,000) for the renovation of the classroom in Ungvár.

