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Árpád János Potápi: Hungarians in Vojvodina represented at every level after elections

On Monday, speaking at a conference in Budapest to evaluate the results of the early parliamentary, provincial and municipal elections in Serbia, State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad at the Prime Minister's Office Árpád János Potápi said that it is a huge result of the elections that all Serbian governments have to count with the Hungarian community in Vojvodina. The state secretary added that there is no reason for pessimism since the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) had retained most of its positions. Mr. Potápi stressed that the VMSZ is an ally and strategic partner of the Hungarian Government and praised it for having successfully mobilized voters for the elections. Speaking at the conference, the president of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians István Pásztor said that the Hungarian community in Vojvodina will continue to be represented by the VMSZ at national, regional and municipal levels after this weekend's elections.

As is known, on 24 April parliamentary, provincial and municipal elections were held in Serbia. The results of the elections brought no surprise: Serbia's governing party, the center-right Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) won the elections. According to the latest results, after 98.56 percent of the votes have been processed, the VMSZ received 1.51 percent of the vote, which means that it will have 4 seats in the 250-member Serbian Parliament instead of the 5 seats it had earlier.

More state funds for Hungarians living abroad

Next year, the amount of budgetary resources allocated for the programs of Hungarian communities living abroad might expand. The Bethlen Gábor Fund (a state fund the aim of which is to enhance the realization of goals connected with the Hungarian Government's strategy for Hungarian communities abroad) will have HUF 20.93 billion (EUR 66 million) instead of the former HUF 11.8 billion (EUR 37 million). According to the draft law on the 2017 central budget, the budget of the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad at the Prime Minister's Office will increase from HUF 5 billion (EUR 16 million) to 6.7 billion (EUR 21 million). In 2017, the House of Hungarians will have HUF 216 million (EUR 691,000). The program entitled Without Borders! under which students living in Hungary travel to Hungarian communities living abroad and vice-versa, will receive HUF 2 billion (EUR 6.4 million) instead of the former HUF 1.2 billion (EUR 3.8 million). Funds allocated for tasks connected with Hungarian-language higher education abroad will be HUF 800 million (EUR 2.5 million).

The Rákóczi Association launches travelling program to Transcarpathia

The Rákóczi Association has launched a travelling program to Ukraine's Transcarpathia for pensioners' associations, clubs and local church communities. Applications for the program can be submitted until 27 May. On Wednesday, speaking at a press conference in Budapest, government commissioner István Grezsa said that the Rákóczi Association has been a reliable partner of Hungarian communities abroad



for two decades and works in close cooperation with the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad. The government commissioner also spoke about the economic development program the Hungarian Government launched for Transcarpathia, and stressed that the development of tourism is one of the program's priorities. He added that following the model of the travelling program for the youth, the Hungarian Government would like to focus on elderly people as well.

A Hungarian cultural center inaugurated in Resicabánya

On Saturday, under the event series entitled Banat Hungarian Days, a Hungarian cultural center was inaugurated in the Govondár district of Romania's Resicabánya/Reșița. Addressing the event, Deputy State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Péter Szilágyi said that the kin-state counts with the Hungarian community in Resicabánya and highly appreciates it. The deputy state secretary added that this is the reason why Hungary supported the establishment of the Hungarian cultural center in the town, and sent an intern to Resicabánya under the Petőfi Sándor Program, to animate Hungarian community life in the region. Mr. Szilágyi stressed that the learning of the Hungarian language and the values of the Hungarian culture make children richer.

During the 2011 census, barely 1 percent of the 295,000-strong county of Krassó-Szörény/Caraș-Severin in Banat declared themselves to be of Hungarian nationality. The majority of Hungarians in the county lives in the 72,000-strong Resicabánya, that is, 1,553 people out of the total Hungarian population (2,938).

The law prohibiting dual citizenship in Slovakia remains in force

The Slovak Parliament did not adopt the proposal submitted by the Freedom and Solidarity party to amend the Slovak Act on Citizenship which prohibits dual citizenship. Therefore, the law remains in force and – similarly to the previous years' practice – people who become the citizen of another country, will be deprived of their Slovak citizenship. The proposal to amend the citizenship law received 27 votes in favor, 61 votes against, 44 abstentions, while 11 MPs did not vote and 7 MPs were not present during the vote. The ten MPs of the Most-Híd Hungarian-Slovak mixed party and Gábor Grendel, a member of the party of Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLaNO) did not vote, while Zsolt Simon, a former member of the Most-Híd voted in favor of the amendment.

The current form of the Slovak Act on Citizenship was adopted in 2010, as a reaction to the law on the simplified naturalization adopted by Hungary. The Slovak citizenship law states that the one who acquires the citizenship of another country, is deprived of his Slovak citizenship. As a result of this law, 1,301 people have been deprived of their Slovak citizenship according to the data of the Slovak Ministry of Interior, among them 66 became Hungarian citizens.



Aleksandar Vučić: the VMSZ is the only certain coalition partner

The president of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), Aleksandar Vučić announced that Serbia will get a new government at the latest 15 days after the National Assembly has been constituted. Mr. Vučić also announced that his party will enter into coalition with the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ). He said that as for the assembly of the province of Vojvodina, the SNS would "undoubtedly try to create an even broader coalition" and added that he doesn't claim the same when it comes to Serbia. The head of the SNS highlighted that a coalition with the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians would give the Progressives (SNS) a majority of 135 deputies. He added that "he would like to make every effort to do the most for the future and development of Vojvodina."



Hungarian language courses in Transcarpathia draw great interest

The Hungarian news agency MTI has reported that the Hungarian language courses launched for Ukrainians living in Transcarpathia draw great interest. The program of language courses was launched by government commissioner at Hungary's Prime Minister's Office István Grezsa at the end of March 2016. Under the program, the Hungarian Government provides an opportunity for Ruthenians and Ukrainians living in Transcarpathia to attend free Hungarian language classes. The number of applicants has been more than expected, since 1,348 people have submitted their applications until the deadline, 11 April. The students will learn Hungarian language in 120 groups, at 43 venues with the help of 63 teachers.

2016 - the year of young Hungarian entrepreneurs abroad - Consultations in Beregszász

Under the program "2016 - the year of young Hungarian entrepreneurs abroad", the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad at the Prime Minister's Office in cooperation with the Design Terminal organize a tour in the Carpathian Basin between March and May 2016. During the tour, the mentors visit 14 different venues in the Carpathian Basin. On 29 April, the tour arrived in Transcarpathia's Beregszász, where young Hungarian entrepreneurs and those who wish to become entrepreneurs had an opportunity to attend lectures and consultations at the Ferenc Rákóczi II. Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute. The event was addressed by the director of the Higher Vocational Education Institute of the Ferenc Rákóczi II. Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute Katalin Soós, the vice-president of the Transcarpathia County Council József Barta and Sándor Ötvös, on behalf of the government commissioner responsible for the government coordination of cooperation between Transcarpathia and Hungary's Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg megye.