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Zsolt Semjén: it is our duty to help Hungarians abroad remain Hungarian

Speaking in an exclusive interview on the radio program “Without Borders” on Kossuth Radio, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Hungarian Communities Abroad Zsolt Semjén said that it is Hungary’s duty to improve the situation of Hungarians living abroad and to help them remain and prosper in their homeland. The Deputy Prime Minister stressed that in 2016 the Hungarian government allocated unprecedented amounts of assistance for strengthening Hungarian communities’ culture, identity and language. Mr. Semjén stressed that educational institutions throughout the Carpathian Basin – from the level of kindergartens to universities – are operating due to Hungary’s state support. As examples he mentioned the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, which has faculties in Csíkszereda/Miercuria Ciuc, Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca and Marosvásárhely/Targu Mures. Mr. Semjén said that by the end of this government term there will be one million new Hungarian citizens. He added that so far 90% of new Hungarians have acquired citizenship under the simplified naturalization procedure, and 10% – mainly those living in the diaspora – have been recognized as Hungarian citizens. The Deputy Prime Minister highlighted that Hungary has launched a HUF 50 billion (EUR 161 million) economic and regional development program in Vojvodina, as part of which Hungarians living in the region receive non-refundable grants and preferential loans. Mr. Semjén said that similar programs were launched in Transcarpathia, Slovenia and Croatia, which also aim to help Hungarians prosper in their homeland. The Deputy Prime Minister added that “for the first time since the Treaty of Trianon, every Hungarian – even if they live in the detached territories – can become citizens of Hungary and the European Union, with all the associated rights.”

Árpád János Potápi: the policy for Hungarian communities abroad had its most successful year ever

Evaluating the 2016 year in an interview on Kossuth Radio’s program “Without Borders”, State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi said that, in terms of the amount of financial support, the policy for Hungarian communities abroad had a more successful year than ever. Mr. Potápi expressed the hope that this progress will continue in 2017, and that more and more Hungarians will be able to prosper in their homeland. The state secretary said that he visited many Hungarian communities in 2016 – both in the Carpathian Basin and the diaspora, and he emphasized the crucial importance of further strengthening ties between the diaspora and the kin-state. Regarding economic assistance for Hungarian communities abroad, Mr. Potápi said that Hungarians abroad are very resolute and are able to realize their plans: they establish associations, and market and manage various products. The state secretary stressed that these are good and useful ideas, and Hungary is glad to support them. He also spoke about the success of the “2016 – year of young Hungarian entrepreneurs” program, saying that – instead of the originally planned HUF 525 million (EUR 1.6 million) – the state secretariat allocated



HUF 600 million (EUR 1.9 million) to the program, within which 117 young Hungarian entrepreneurs received assistance from Hungary.

The RMDSZ concludes agreement with the PSD

The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) has concluded an agreement with the parties of the Social Liberal coalition, which will form a government in Romania: the Social Democratic Party (PSD), which won 47% of the votes in the recent parliamentary election; and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE), which won 6% (the RMDSZ received 6.5 %). The document on the agreement was signed in the Parliament building in Bucharest by the president of the RMDSZ Hunor Kelemen and the heads of the PSD-ALDE coalition. The parties agreed that among their main priorities they will support the following: education and health initiatives; infrastructure developments laid down in the government program and the realization of a motorway project; the decentralization of public utility services; wage increases for employees working in local and county public administration; and the settling of the situation of properties nationalized in the communist era. The parties also pledged that they would ensure compliance with the obligations laid down in laws and international agreements – which were signed by Romania – on the use of national minorities' mother tongues in public administration, mother tongue education and the use of symbols.

József Menyhárt: 2016 was the year of re-planning and construction for the MKP

Speaking at a press conference in Pozsony/Bratislava, evaluating the past year, the president of the Party of the Hungarian Community (MKP) József Menyhárt said that 2016 was the year of re-planning and construction for the MKP; this process will continue in 2017, but this year the main emphasis will be on construction. Regarding the future plans of the MKP, Mr. Menyhárt said that a priority purpose will be to maintain and strengthen the positions of the party during local county elections which are scheduled to take place in the fall. He added that in 2013 the MKP reached very good results in local elections: it won 43 seats in the county council and had 3 vice-chairmen. Mr. Menyhárt added that they will continue the strengthening of the MKP: they will restructure the party's internal regulation and will realize its strategic plans. The head of the MKP emphasized that they would like to pay more attention to natural regions and intend to develop the centers of these regions into strong economic and cultural centers.



István Pásztor: the most important aim is to stop assimilation

Evaluating the 2016 year, the president of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) István Pásztor said that the general interest in the Hungarian Government's economic development program in Vojvodina is constant since people see that this program ensures real opportunities for them: both its administrative phase and implementation is quick and dynamic. Mr. Pásztor said that 2016 was a successful year, even if it had some constraints. The head of the VMSZ added that the new calls for application of the economic development program also draw great attention, since people who won in the first round can apply again. Concerning the main problems of the Hungarian community in Vojvodina, he said that assimilation is a real danger, and it is a crucial duty of the VMSZ to slow down, stop or even reverse this process. Mr. Pásztor said that the VMSZ is the only organization which can offer solutions to the existing problems and has the necessary means to realize them. He added that one of these means is the economic development program, as well as the VMSZ' government participation at national, provincial and local level.



Hungary builds roads and kindergartens in Transcarpathia

In an interview to the Hungarian daily Hungarian Times (Magyar Idők), government commissioner at the Prime Minister's Office István Grezsa said that Hungary ensures several billions Forints for Transcarpathia in order to show that it is worth being Hungarian in this region. The government commissioner said that due to non-refundable aids and preferential loans Hungary provides for Transcarpathian Hungarians, roads are built, nursery schools and educational institutions are renovated, and these investments also make a positive effect on Ukrainian-Hungarian relations. Mr. Grezsa said that the government commissioner's cabinet responsible for the coordination of cooperation and accorded development tasks in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County and Transcarpathia is also planning to launch a new scholarship program for local Hungarian teachers living in dispersed communities. According to the plans, 10 teachers would receive financial assistance as part of the program. Mr. Grezsa added that in 2017 Hungary will allocate HUF 5 billion (EUR 16 million) for economic development in Transcarpathia, while the Eximbank will ensure HUF 20 billion (EUR 64 million) of preferential loan for those enterprises which intend to invest in the region.



Rio de Janeiro's Christ statue lit up in Hungarian national colors

On 30 December, the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro was lit up in Hungary's national colors. In a statement connected to the issue, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary said that the aim of the gesture was to acknowledge Hungary's role in protecting Christianity as well as the contributions of the Hungarian community in Brazil to the country's development. The statement



recalled that Dom Orani Tempesta, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro, had offered to carry out the lighting project on the occasion of a Hungarian national holiday each year, when he met Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén in October. This year, the occasion chosen is to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the crowning of the last Hungarian king, the beatified Charles IV. In 2017, the proposed Hungarian national day to be commemorated this way is August 20th, St Stephen's Day and the Day of Statehood.

