

Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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PRIME MINISTERS OFFICE
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COMMUNITIES ABROAD

NPKI | RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR HUNGARIAN
COMMUNITIES ABROAD



Educational aid for Hungarian communities abroad is announced again

Speaking at a press conference in Budapest, State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi announced that Hungarian children living abroad will receive educational aid from the Hungarian Government again, and the sum of the aid will be raised again to HUF 22,400 (EUR 72) per person. The state secretary said that the aim of this program is to support Hungarian-language education in neighboring countries. He added that the assistance will be paid to the parents of children attending Hungarian-language schools in the currency of the concerned state. Mr. Potápi recalled that in the past three years the amount of the assistance was lower (HUF 17,200/EUR 55) due to a budgetary amendment. He added that in 2016, 240,000 children received the assistance worth HUF 4.1 billion (EUR 13 million).

Árpád János Potápi: national minorities should assert their rights

Speaking at a conference in Budapest entitled “Fight for the extension of rights: means and opportunities in Ukraine” organized by the Research Institute for Hungarian Communities Abroad (NPKI), State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi said that it is extremely important that national minorities are aware of their rights and assert them. The state secretary recalled the great results the Cultural Association of Hungarians in Transcarpathia (KMKSZ) achieved in municipal elections in Ukraine. Mr. Potápi expressed his regret that in recent weeks some negative tendencies are observed in Ukraine’s educational politics which do not favor national minorities. He added that Hungary rejects Ukraine’s planned reforms and is trying to stand up against them. He stressed that the most important aim of Hungary’s policy for Hungarian communities abroad is to help Hungarians prosper in their homeland, and Transcarpathia is not an exception. The state secretary highlighted that – for this aim – the Hungarian Government had launched a HUF 32 billion (EUR 103 million) economic development program in the region and is allocating huge sums for the development and expansion of Transcarpathia’s institutional system. Speaking at the conference, the chairman of the KMKSZ László Brenzovics said that the Ukrainian Government’s planned reform in the field of education and language use would be a considerable step back for the Hungarian community. He added that “Ukraine’s EU integration and internal stability cannot be realized without the enforcement of minority rights in the country.”

Árpád János Potápi: the decision of the European Court of Justice on the issue of national minorities is an important step forward

Addressing a conference entitled “Closer to the goal: the EU’s minority politics after the decision of the Luxembourg Court of Justice” organized by the Research Institute for Hungarian Communities Abroad (NPKI), State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi said that the decision the European Court of Justice made last Friday is an important step forward in the field of placing the issue



of national and linguistic minorities on the agenda of the EU. A citizens' committee consisting of the members of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) prepared an initiative named Minority SafePack in 2013 and submitted it to the European Commission in order to call on the European Union to improve the protection of national and linguistic minorities and strengthen cultural and linguistic diversity in the European Union. The European Commission refused to register the initiative, stating that it fell "manifestly outside the framework of the Commission's powers". The FUEN challenged the resolution of the European Commission at the Court of Justice of the EU which annulled the resolution in its verdict issued on last Friday. Hungary joined the lawsuit on the side of the initiators, while Slovakia, Greece and Romania took part in it on the side of the European Commission. Árpád János Potápi stressed that the FUEN's victory is important not only from the point of view of national minorities: the main aim of the initiative is to strengthen democracy in Europe, to increase the legitimacy of decisions and to bring the EU closer to citizens in order to involve them more actively in the formation of the EU's life.



Zsolt Biro reelected chairman of the MPP

Speaking at the congress of the Hungarian Civic Party (MPP) in Szatmárnémeti/Satu Mare in north-west Romania, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Hungarian Communities Abroad and head of the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) Zsolt Semjén said that "Hungary's arm is extended towards Romania", and "the improvement of Hungarian-Slovakian and Hungarian-Serbian relations imply that Hungary was not to blame for the slow progress in its ties with Romania." The Deputy Prime Minister stressed that "Hungarians and Romanians are dependent on each other", therefore, they must cooperate, "not only because Romania is one of Hungary's most important trading partners, but also because 1.5 million Hungarians live here." Mr. Semjén said that Hungary is the biggest supporter of Serbia's accession to the European Union and it has also extended its hand to Romania. At the congress, the former head of the Hungarian Civic Party Zsolt Biró was reelected chairman of the MPP for the next four years. Mr. Biró was the only candidate and received eighty votes in favor and only seven votes against. Addressing the congress, he asked the participants to authorize him to deepen and expand Hungarian political dialogue in Transylvania and involve everyone in this process "who is ready to take part in it."



Hungarian schools in Slovakia's Gúta will not be merged

In the recent days, one of the main topics of Hungarian public life in Slovakia was the issue of Hungarian schools in Gúta/Kolárovo. Some days ago the municipality of Gúta decided to merge two Hungarian schools in the town: the Ferenc Rákóczi II. Elementary School and the Mátyás Corvin Elementary School. In response to this decision, the residents of the town submitted a petition and collected more than



2,000 signatures during six days, protesting against the merging of the schools. The mayor of the town, Árpád Horváth announced that he would veto the decision of the municipality. He stressed that “the decision was not accepted by the local society. In addition, it might have a serious impact on the situation of Hungarian-language education in Slovakia.” The mayor of the town stressed that “What the town needs is peace, and the preservation of the untroubled education of children in Gúta.”

Development Agency opens in Vojvodina

The Provincial Parliament has initiated the opening of a development agency in Vojvodina. The provincial government announced that the Vojvodina Development Agency would be established as a limited liability company to support development politics, agricultural and regional development in Vojvodina in order to enhance economic development in the region. The founder of the Vojvodina Development Agency is the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and its bodies include the representatives and the director. The tasks of the representatives will be fulfilled by the provincial government.

Transcarpathian ethnic organizations and county leaders discuss the planned restriction of linguistic rights in Ukraine

A roundtable discussion on the planned restriction of national minorities’ linguistic rights in Ukraine was held in Ungvár/Uzhhorod, with the participation of Transcarpathian ethnic organizations, the county’s governor and the leaders of the Transcarpathian County Council. The conference was initiated by the governor of Transcarpathia Hennadiy Moskal. The participants of the event examined and discussed the three draft language laws of Ukraine which had been submitted to the Ukrainian Parliament, highlighting the negative effects the laws might have on the situation of national minorities in the country. Speaking at the conference, the governor said that the majority of the draft laws’ provisions are “absurd and cannot be realized in practice.”

New Hungarian community center opens in Transcarpathia

On Saturday, Hungarian officials inaugurated a new Hungarian community center in Csap/Chop in western Ukraine’s Transcarpathia region, built in part from funds contributed by the Hungarian Government. Hungary contributed more than HUF 30 million (EUR 97,300) to the construction of the community center which will be operated by the Cultural Association of Hungarians in Transcarpathia (KMKSZ). Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Ernő Keskeny, Hungary’s ambassador to Kiev said that the community center would be a worthy venue for hosting events for the Hungarians of the Ungvár/Uzhhorod district and local Hungarian organizations.



Government commissioner responsible for development coordination between eastern Hungary and Transcarpathia István Grezsa said that the inauguration of the community center gave cause for a “double celebration” because it not only demonstrated Transcarpathian Hungarians’ will to live but was also a significant event for Hungary because “we form a single national community.”

Ferenc Puskás statue unveiled in Melbourne

A bronze statue of famous Hungarian football player Ferenc Puskás was unveiled in Melbourne’s Olympic Park on Saturday. The ceremony was attended by the Head of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Hungarian National Assembly Zsolt Németh who said that “diplomacy and the policy for Hungarian communities abroad complement each other in an exemplary way in Australia.” He added that the Puskás Statue is also a good example of how we can strengthen the identity and self-esteem of the 100,000-strong Hungarian community, and, at the same time, develop bilateral relations, in particular, relations in the field of sports.
