

Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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COMMUNITIES ABROAD

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Conference on Hungarian communities abroad and autonomy in Budapest

On Friday, a conference entitled “Hungarian autonomy in Central Europe” was held on Hungarian communities abroad and autonomy at the Kodolányi János College in Budapest. The conference was organized by the Kodolányi János College, the Institute for Cultural Relations Policy and the Research Institute for Hungarian Communities Abroad (NPKI) and supported by the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad. Speaking at the conference, Deputy State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Péter Szilágyi said that the main objective of the policy for Hungarian communities abroad is to preserve the identity of Hungarians living abroad and help them prosper in their homeland. He added that the Hungarian government is supporting those Hungarian communities living outside the kin-state which have expressed their needs for autonomy. Mr. Szilágyi highlighted that many international documents state that autonomy can contribute to the enforcement of national minorities’ rights and the prevention of assimilation, and therefore governments must handle endeavors for autonomy with understanding. The deputy state secretary stressed that the best practices and existing forms of autonomy must serve as examples for states.

Hungary allocates increasing support for the Without borders! program

Parliamentary State Secretary at the Ministry of Human Capacities Bence Rétvári has announced that the Hungarian government will allocate increased support for the Without Borders! program, within which students living in the kin-state travel to Hungarian communities in neighboring countries. The state secretary added that the program will not only receive more funds, but its scope will also expand: schools which apply for the program and win can spend the money not only on travelling and accommodation, but also on various other costs such as entrance fees and the pay of teachers. Schools can submit their applications in four phases, but – due to the positive changes in the program – the number of applications received in the first phase in 2017 exceeded the total number of applications submitted last year (927).



Hungarian and German place name signs will be installed in Kolozsvár

On Friday, speaking at a press conference, the mayor of Kolozsvár Emil Boc announced that he will not appeal against the decision of the court of first instance, and so multilingual place-name signs will be installed in Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca. The mayor added that, in addition to the name of the town in Romanian (Cluj Napoca), its name will also be indicated in Hungarian (Kolozsvár) and German (Klausenburg). Mr. Boc added that he would also like to refer to the Roman origin of the town, so above the trilingual place name sign a stone table will be placed with the name of the town used in the era of the Roman Empire (Municipium Aelium Napocense ab Imperatore Hadriano Conditum).



As has been reported, on 21 February, the court of Kolozs/Cluj County made a decision in the first instance according to which the name of Kolozsvár must also be indicated in the Hungarian language. The mayoral office had an opportunity to appeal against this decision in the following days, but it did not do so. The mayoral office had been taken to court by the Minority Rights association, and the lawsuit was joined by 370 residents of the town.

[The council of Marosvásárhely rejects the town's planned school network](#)

On Thursday, the council of Marosvásárhely/Targu Mures rejected a draft resolution which intended to determine the school network of the town for the next academic year. The school network suggested by the mayoral office did not include the Roman Catholic High School, the Reformed High School and a further six educational institutions which are currently operating. The meeting of the council was also attended by dozens of parents and civil activists. The faction leaders of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) and the Party of Free People (POL) declared that they would vote against the draft resolution. In the end, the resolution was rejected with no votes in favor, 13 votes against and 4 abstentions.

As has been reported, in November 2016 the Romanian Anti-corruption Directorate (DNA) brought József Zsolt Tamás, the director of the Ferenc Rákóczi II Roman Catholic High School of Marosvásárhely, under official supervision on suspicion of abuse of office, and has launched criminal proceedings against him. The Romanian public prosecutor's office also arrested the chief superintendent of Maros county Ștefan Someșan on suspicion of abuse of office and two counts of exceeding his power. Both actions were in connection with the establishment of the school. As a result of the proceedings and the school's uncertain legal situation, in February 2017 the education inspectorate of Maros County decided to stop the enrolment of new students to the school. The parents of the school's students held several demonstrations because of the decision. The proceedings of the DNA were condemned by many Hungarian political and civil organizations, both in Transylvania and abroad. The Hungarian government also stood up for the persecuted leaders and expressed their solidarity with them, as did students of the school and concerned parents.

[The RMDSZ informs EC experts of the situation of Hungarians in Romania](#)

A delegation of experts from the Council of Europe made a visit to Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca, where they were informed by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) about the situation of the local Hungarian community and Romania's continuous violation of its undertakings made at the ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The four-member committee met with the executive chairman of the RMDSZ and its politicians on Monday. The representatives of the RMDSZ confirmed their statements laid down in their minority report which was submitted last year. The minority report was a reaction to Romania's country report which was submitted after a delay of two and a



half years. The executive chairman of the RMDSZ, Bálint Porcsalmi, highlighted that “Romania presents an ideal picture of the situation of national minorities in the country, but it is ignoring both its own laws and its undertakings made in international conventions.” He added that the Romanian government’s report contains many “inaccuracies and distortions, and therefore provides a false picture” about the state of minority rights.

Péter Szilágyi: family businesses give strength to Hungarians living in Slovakia

Speaking at a Slovakian stop on the Carpathian Basin road show of the “2017 – year of Hungarian family businesses abroad” in Révkomárom/Komárno, Deputy State Secretary for Hungarian communities abroad Péter Szilágyi said that “both young entrepreneurs and family businesses give sustaining strength for Hungarians living in Slovakia, and so they must be supported within the economic development program.” Komárom was the first Slovakian stop on the road show launched by the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad. Speaking at the event, Mr. Szilágyi presented the previous thematic programs of the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad, introducing their main objectives and results, and the goals of the 2017 thematic year.

István Pásztor: Aleksandar Vucic’s victory will have a positive impact on the situation of Hungarians in Vojvodina

Evaluating the results of the Serbian presidential election held on 2 April, the chairman of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) István Pásztor said that the landslide victory of Aleksandar Vucic might improve the situation of Hungarians living in Vojvodina. Being part of the government coalition, the VMSZ supported Aleksandar Vucic during the campaign. Mr. Pásztor said that Mr. Vucic, who served as Prime Minister of Serbia in the past years, might have a positive impact on Serbian-Hungarian relations. He added that relations between the two countries have greatly improved in the recent period, and this trend is likely to continue. Mr. Pásztor added that the main beneficiaries of these relations are Hungarians living in Serbia and Serbs living in Hungary. The head of the VMSZ said that, regardless of what problematic issues occur between the two nations, they will be able to solve them through their cooperation.

The EP adopts visa-free travel for citizens of Ukraine

At its plenary session held on Thursday in Strasbourg, the European Parliament voted in favor of visa-free travel to Europe for Ukrainian citizens. The law received 521



votes in favor, 75 votes against and 36 abstentions, and could enter into force on 20 June, after the Council of the European Union adopts it. In a statement sent to the Hungarian news agency MTI, MEP Andrea Bocskor of the Fidesz-KDNP party alliance (representing Hungarian communities living in Transcarpathia) highlighted that visa-free travel helps many people travel and work abroad, and also strengthens relations between national minority communities living in Ukraine with their compatriots living in the kin-state.

The KMKSZ holds its 28th assembly in Beregszász

On Saturday, the Cultural Association of Hungarians in Transcarpathia (KMKSZ) held its 28th assembly in Beregszász/Berehove. Addressing the event, State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi said that thanks should go to the Hungarian community in Transylvania for the brave steadfastness and perseverance it has showed for its survival over the past almost one hundred years. Mr. Potápi also praised the cooperation which was formed between the two largest Hungarian organizations in the region, the KMKSZ and the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Ukraine (UMDSZ) two years ago, calling it a “cooperation of crucial importance” from the point of view of the Hungarian community. Evaluating the past three years of his presidency, the head of the KMKSZ and member of the Ukrainian Parliament László Brenzovics said that the KMKSZ has represented the interests of the Hungarian community in Transcarpathia for 28 years, and today has become one of the main political forces in the region. At the end of the assembly, the delegates elected Mr. Brenzovics president of the KMKSZ for a further three years.

The Hungarian government supports Transcarpathian Hungarians through economic development programs

Speaking in Beregszász/Berehove at the first Transcarpathian stop on the Carpathian Basin road show of the “2017 – year of Hungarian family businesses abroad” launched by the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities abroad, Deputy State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Péter Szilágyi said that the Hungarian government is striving to help the Transcarpathian Hungarian community through the strengthening of its economic stability – including through support for Hungarian family enterprises. Mr. Szilágyi stressed that the Hungarian government is standing by Hungarian communities abroad – both in the Carpathian Basin and the diaspora – not only at the level of words, but also at the level of deeds.

On Friday, speaking in Transcarpathia’s Munkács/Mukachevo, State Secretary for Economic Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Levente Magyar, who was on a tour in the region to promote the Hungarian government’s Transcarpathian economic development program, declared that “the Hungarian government requests in the strongest possible terms that its Ukrainian partners ask its authorities to refrain from harassing Hungarian institutions in Transcarpathia, and that legislators in Kiev do not introduce laws that represent a step backward in terms



of minority rights". Mr. Magyar added that the introduction of any legislation that curtails the rights of the Hungarian minority will provoke the strongest possible protests on the part of the Hungarian government.

