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Zsolt Semjén: a “national” paradigm shift has started in family policy

Speaking at the world meeting of families in Budapest, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Hungarian communities abroad Zsolt Semjén said that with the extension of maternity allowance to Hungarian citizens living abroad, a “national” paradigm shift has started in Hungary’s family policy. The Deputy Prime Minister stressed that it is not one of Hungary aims to solve the country’s demographic problems by reducing the number of Hungarians living abroad, since it would contradict belief in a unified Hungarian nation. Mr. Semjén added that the main causes of the decline in Hungarian populations are different in neighboring countries: in Transylvania emigration is the main problem; in Slovakia it is assimilation; while in Transcarpathia it is natural decrease. Concerning the Hungarian government’s assistance allocated to Hungarian communities abroad, Mr. Semjén said that this support not only serves the economic prosperity of these communities, but also their demographic growth.

Árpád János Potápi: “Trianon was the violent disruption of everything that belongs together”

Speaking in Hungary’s Csátalja at a commemoration marking the Day of National Cohesion, State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi said that “the signing of the Treaty of Trianon 97 years ago was painful not only because Hungary lost its territories and compatriots; Trianon was the violent disruption of everything that belongs together.” Mr. Potápi highlighted that it is very difficult to express what the events which took part on 4 June 1920 mean for Hungarians. He stressed that “we must remember the former Hungary and those historical events which – in an indirect way – still determine our present.” The state secretary recalled that since 2010, the Hungarian government has adopted a number of measures which enhance the unity of the Hungarian nation. He said that it was exactly six years ago, on 26 May 2011, that the Hungarian National Assembly adopted the law on dual citizenship, as a result of which the number of new Hungarian citizens living in the Carpathian Basin and the diaspora reached 950,000. Mr. Potápi said that the unity of Hungarians was further strengthened by Hungary’s new Fundamental Law, which was adopted in 2011 and declares that “Hungary shall bear responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living beyond its borders”. Mr. Potápi also drew attention to the fact that “ties between the kin-state and Hungarians living in the diaspora have also become stronger in the recent period.”

Péter Szilágyi: Zsuzsanna Kossuth’s life is a message for Hungarians living abroad

On Friday, speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Zsuzsanna Kossuth Memorial Park in Hungary’s Sárbogárd, Deputy State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Péter Szilágyi said that Zsuzsanna Kossuth’s life and heritage is a strong message for the universal Hungarian nation, since it teaches us that “there is



no external circumstance or power which can break a real Hungarian heart.” Mr. Szilágyi said that Zsuzsanna Kossuth – who was Lajos Kossuth’s youngest sister and the chief nurse in Hungary’s military hospitals during the 1848/49 Hungarian Revolution and Freedom Fight – was “a role model in revolution and peace, as a woman and mother, both in her homeland and in exile, and she is still a role model for Hungarian communities living abroad.” Mr. Szilágyi also announced that marking the 200th anniversary of Zsuzsanna Kossuth’s birth, a tombstone will be placed on her grave, which is located in the garden of the Presbyterian church in New York’s Fifth Avenue. He added that Hungary’s Consul General in New York Ferenc Kumin confirmed that the Presbyterian College of New York has already approved this plan.



The RMDSZ submits its law amendment proposal to extend the use of mother tongue

On Tuesday, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) submitted its proposal on the amendment of the public administration law, the aim of which is to extend national minorities’ rights to use their mother tongue in Romania. Currently national minorities can officially use their native language in local public administration if their ratio reaches 20% of a town’s population. The proposed draft law would reduce this threshold to 10%. The draft law would also introduce an alternative threshold in order to give an opportunity to those members of national minorities whose community is small in percentage terms but large in number. The RMDSZ is also proposing to enact sanctions against those municipalities which violate linguistic rights. The chairman of the RMDSZ Hunor Kelemen stressed that “Bucharest is continually declaring that minority issues in Romania have been solved and the country’s minority policy is exemplary. In contrast to this, we think that nothing is solved.”

Trilingual place names signs to be installed in Zilah

On Thursday, the municipality of Zilah/Zalău decided to install trilingual – Romanian, Hungarian and German – place name signs at the entries and exits of the town. In accordance with the resolution submitted by the local members of the RMDSZ, in addition to place name signs with the inscription Zalău, the name of the town will also be indicated in Hungarian (Zilah) and German (Zillenmarkt). Beside the trilingual place names signs, signs with welcome and farewell messages will also be installed in six languages. The initiators of the action have stated that “Zilah has always been characterized by cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and both the German and Hungarian communities have contributed to the prosperity of the town.”



The Hungarian government supports the renovation of church institutions in Máramaros

State Secretary for church, minority and civil society relations at the Ministry of Human Capacities Miklós Soltész announced that the Hungarian government will allocate HUF 95 million (EUR 310,000) for the renovation of the new building of the László Németh High School in Nagybánya/Baia Mare and HUF 7 million (EUR 22,000) for the renovation of the Máramarossziget/Sighetu Marmăției community building of the Catholic Church. The state secretary added that, together with Roman Catholic priest Jenő Schönberger, he visited those places in Transylvania in which churches can contribute to the permanence of the local Hungarian community through the support of educational institutions, disabled people and different religious activities.



Péter Szijjártó: it is in Hungary's interest to provide economic help for the Hungarian community in Slovakia

On Friday, Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó made a one-day official visit to Pozsony/Bratislava, where he took part in the Globsec security policy forum, held bilateral talks with his Slovakian counterpart Miroslav Lajčák and met with the leaders of the Party of the Hungarian Community (MKP). The main topic of the talks with the MKP was Hungary's economic development plan for Slovakia through which the Hungarian government intends to support Hungarian small and medium size enterprises in Slovakia. Speaking at a press conference after the talks, Mr. Szijjártó and head of the MKP József Menyhárt announced that the application period for the economic development program will start in the summer. Mr. Menyhárt said that it is important to grasp every opportunity which helps the integration of Slovakia's southern region. He stressed that "Hungarian-populated regions are lagging behind other regions of the country, and this is clearly seen in the figures." The head of the MKP emphasized that "nowadays it is not enough to focus on culture and education: a community can only survive if it is based on a firm economic basis." He added that the Hungarian government's economic recovery plan can help a lot in this respect.

104 workshops and educational farms are established in the Carpathian Basin

On Monday, speaking in Slovakia's Révkomárom/Komárno, State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi announced that, over the past two years, 104 workshops and educational farms were established in the Carpathian Basin. The funding for these came from the Hungarian government's HUF 738 million (EUR 2.4 million) budget allocated to Hungarian communities abroad within the "2015 – year of Hungarian vocational education abroad" program. In Révkomárom the state secretary handed over new equipment for two Hungarian-language vocational educational schools. Mr. Potápi added that over the past two years, 22 workshops and education farms worth HUF 140 million (EUR 456,000) were



established or renovated in Slovakia, and – thanks to the Hungarian government’s student exchange program – 11 Hungarian groups from Slovakia had an opportunity to spend a certain period of practice in some of Hungary’s vocational educational institutions. Mr. Potápi stressed that the Hungarian government’s aim is to help young Hungarian people living abroad find jobs and prosper in their homeland. Mr. Potápi added that, in addition to the year of Hungarian vocational education abroad (which started in 2015 and continued in 2016 and 2017), in 2016 the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities abroad launched a separate thematic year to support young Hungarian entrepreneurs abroad and – in 2017 – a thematic year for Hungarian family businesses abroad, within which Hungarian entrepreneurs in Slovakia also receive considerable support.



Hungarian Development Center and Tisza Ltd. sign cooperation agreement in Ungvár

On Saturday the Hungarian Development Center Nonprofit Ltd. and Tisza Ltd. European Territorial Association (Tisza ETT) signed a cooperation agreement in Ungvár/Uzhhorod on joint Hungarian-Ukrainian regional development. Speaking at the event, the governor of Transcarpathia Hennadiy Moskal stressed that the EU has clearly expressed its confidence in Ukraine by providing visa-free travel for Ukrainian citizens. Hungary’s Minister of National Development Miklós Seszták said that Tisza Ltd. is a real success story, which is a special and important initiative. He said that it is special because it is the first territorial association in Europe established by an EU Member State and a non-EU state, and is a success story because it strengthens cooperation between nations.



Péter Szilágyi: the Hungarian diaspora is extremely important for the Hungarian government

Participating in several events of Hungarian organizations in the Netherlands, Deputy State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Péter Szilágyi stressed that the Hungarian diaspora is extremely important for the Hungarian government. Its main goal is to address young Hungarian people in the diaspora, strengthen economic relations and enhance diaspora diplomacy. On Sunday Mr. Szilágyi gave a presentation at the meeting of the Mikes Kelemen Kör on issues currently affecting Hungarian communities abroad and Hungary’s diaspora policy, and on Saturday he attended a ceremony marking the 60th anniversary of the Hungarian Federation in the Netherlands. Speaking to the Hungarian news agency MTI, Mr. Szilágyi said that Hungary pays particular attention to education in the diaspora and provides support for Hungarian weekend schools throughout the world (their current number is more than 200). He added that a further aim of Hungary is to address young people in the



diaspora and attract them to Hungary either for short visits and immersion trips or even for permanent settlement.

