

Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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PRIME MINISTERS OFFICE
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COMMUNITIES ABROAD

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Zsolt Semjén: the policy for Hungarian communities abroad is a successful area

Speaking at a press conference in Budapest on Thursday, Zsolt Semjén, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Hungarian Communities Abroad and head of the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), said that over the past 8 years the amount of financial assistance allocated to Hungarian communities abroad has increased tenfold. The Deputy Prime Minister held a joint press conference with State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi, with the aim of presenting the publication "Results of the policy for Hungarian communities abroad – 2010-2018." Mr. Semjén stressed that they had to start everything "from scratch": in 2010 the "wounds caused by Ferenc Gyurcsány's betrayal of the nation" were still very painful, after Hungarians living abroad had been deprived of the opportunity to acquire Hungarian citizenship. The Deputy Prime Minister added that the kin-state has given the only possible answer to the tragedy of the Treaty of Trianon: the introduction of the simplified naturalization procedure – as a result of which the number of new Hungarian citizens has now exceeded 1 million; and the policy for Hungarian communities abroad, which has been built over the past eight years. Mr. Semjén stressed that these results are "history itself", and they will always remain. He added that the descendants of the new Hungarian citizens will also be Hungarian citizens with voting rights, and will be able to make the Hungarian Government "take them seriously". He noted that the Hungarian National Assembly is also their parliament. Mr. Semjén emphasized that the policy for Hungarian communities abroad is based on four main pillars: the unification of the nation under constitutional law; the preservation of the identity of Hungarians living abroad; the strengthening of relations with Hungarian organizations and parties abroad; and the economic development of Hungarian territories abroad.



Academic and civil organizations protest against the merging of MOGYE and the Petru Maior University

In a resolution of protest issued on Wednesday, the Kolozsvár Territorial Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences observed that the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Marosvásárhely/Targu Mures (MOGYE) was founded in 1948 as a Hungarian-language education institute, and that on 18 April 2018 the University's senate – in which Romanians are in the majority – decided that MOGYE would be merged with the Petru Maior University, preserving its current statutes and legal personality. The committee has also underlined that this merger would drastically change the ethnic proportions and would lead to the Hungarian members of the Senate having no say in the issues of the University. The Society for the Protection of Hungarians' Rights in Romania also expressed its concern regarding the merger of the



two institutions. The Society joined representatives of Hungarian academic, civil and political spheres, and declared that they stand up for the independence of MOGYE and the maintenance of Hungarian-language medical education.

Árpád János Potápi: the Jókai Theater is a shelter, home and meeting point for Hungarians living in Slovakia

Speaking before the presentation of the famous Hungarian play *Bánk bán* at the jubilee season of the Jókai Theater in Slovakia, State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi stressed that the Jókai Theater is a shelter, home and meeting point for Hungarians living in Slovakia. *Bánk bán* was the last premiere of the theater's 65th season. The state secretary said that the play by well-known Hungarian author József Katona is an indispensable work of Hungarian drama. He also stressed the importance of the Jókai Theater of Slovakia and the message of *Bánk bán*, which is still relevant today. Mr. Potápi said that the Jókai Theater has always had a much more important role than connecting authors and audiences, since the theater is a living community: it has grown into the shelter, home and meeting point for Hungarians living in Slovakia.

Hungarian students win lawsuit against the University of Újvidék

According to a court ruling, Hungarians were discriminated against when the Faculty of Law of the University of Újvidék/Novi Sad withdrew the opportunity for Hungarians to take entrance examinations in their mother tongue. The court's decision was presented by the head of the National Conference of Students' Councils (HÖÖK) Tibor Gulyás on Monday. According to the decision, in the future the University should provide an opportunity for students to take entrance exams in their native language. Mr. Gulyás added that the Hungarian Students' Association of Vojvodina (VaMaDiSz) managed to win a great victory for Hungarian students. He added that from the very beginning the VaMaDiSz has made every effort to eliminate the unlawful practices of the University, and to ensure equal opportunities for students. Mr. Gulyás added that although in 2016 the court rejected the petition, in the end students managed to win.

Yet another blow against national minorities is being prepared in Ukraine

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó has declared that Ukraine is taking "unprecedentedly contemptible and premeditated" action against national minorities, and step by step the Ukrainian president and parliament are stripping national minorities of their acquired rights, while, "in an international campaign of lies", they depict themselves as victims of geopolitics who are adhering to



international law. “The ‘first blow’ against minority rights was the Education Act, in which they significantly restricted the rights of national minorities to receive education in their native language, and despite international pressure, Ukraine continues to refuse to begin negotiations on the issue with minority representatives”, the Minister said. Mr. Szijjártó said that the “second blow” was declaring the Language Act to be unconstitutional, and in this regard he noted that currently there are three pieces of draft legislation on a possible new Language Act before Ukraine’s parliament, and “each one is worse than the other”. As an example, he cited the fact that minority languages can currently be used if the ratio of ethnic language speakers in a community is 10 percent, but this lower limit would be raised to 33 percent, which would dramatically restrict the rights of national minorities.

Hungarian Prime Minister’s Office condemns desecration of Reformed Church in Transcarpathia

According to a statement issued on Friday by the Hungarian Prime Minister’s Office, the recent attack against the Reformed church of Beregszász/Berehove “desecrating a holy place”, which is an important center of the ethnic Hungarian community in Ukraine, is shocking and appalling. On Thursday night unknown perpetrators painted a red symbol on the church’s wall. The statement – which was issued by Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén and State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi, underlines that a series of incidents suffered by Hungarians in Transcarpathia in recent months – including a petrol bomb attack against the headquarters of the Cultural Association of Hungarians in Transcarpathia (KMKSZ) – give reason for concern. The two politicians added that the most recent incident targeting the Hungarian community’s religious center violates the religious tolerance that has always characterized residents in Transcarpathia. In their statement Mr. Semjén and Mr. Potápi also expressed their solidarity with the Transcarpathian Hungarian community and said that, as well as guaranteeing the security of ethnic Hungarians in Transcarpathia, they expect the Ukrainian authorities to reveal the background leading to the attack and find the perpetrators, in order to prevent similar instances happening in the future.

