

## **MINORITY STUDIES**



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## **Protection without definition – notes on the concept of “minority rights” in Europe<sup>1</sup>**

### **1. States and minorities**

In the European context, the evolution of the modern nation-state system was followed by endeavours for national and linguistic unification as well. The first attempt to create a unified, linguistically and culturally homogeneous state started with the French Revolution in 1789 (Cf.: Ó Riagáin 2001 and Preece Jackson 1998). The new French state was built on the common rights and duties of the citizens, but without the cultural indifference which characterised the monarchic state that preceded it. The new model of national state was clearly based on national unity and a centralized government. All new nation-states which appeared in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (take Germany or Italy as examples) followed this pattern. In this context the unity of the state was meant to reflect the unity of the nation and also the unity of the language and culture. (“One nation, one state... and one language.”) Unity in this context correlates with exclusiveness and the necessity to regulate some of its consequences. The rise of this nation-state model implied the development of normative government policies on identity, language use, the recognition of an official language, cultural tradition and national symbols.

After the First World War this model was followed by the newly created states as well, which came into being following the dissolution of the two multiethnic monarchies, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. But at the same time these developments strongly frightened the survival of smaller, minority communities. At first sight the problem was recognised as a threat to the fundamental linguistic and cultural identity of minorities (which used to belong to the national majority before the territorial changes), without direct political, and territorial implications.

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<sup>1</sup> Paper presented at the 84th session of UAI in Budapest and as part of the research project OTKA No. 105432.

The protection of linguistic rights of minorities appeared on the European political agenda when following the Paris peace conference, new states emerged (like Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, or Greater-Romania) on the basis of the principle of self-determination (promoted by American President Woodrow Wilson), though which had sizeable minority populations as well.<sup>2</sup> To compensate these minority communities, a number of different so-called minorities treaties were stipulated between European states under the aegis of the League of Nations. These treaties covered various minority rights, including the principle of non-discrimination, the right to education in minority languages, etc. The main problem with the minorities treaties regime was that state obligations varied greatly and only a few European states were subjected to these treaties, which could then claim that the international community discriminates against them. These international treaty obligations were often perceived as hindering the creation of modern unitary nations in these states. On the other hand kin-states in the interwar period have never given up their claims for territorial revision. This led quite soon to the neglect of minorities treaties and later, after World War II with replacement by the universal recognition of basic human rights. Terms, the whole system minorities treaties was considered to have become irrelevant.<sup>3</sup> After World War II, however, minority issues received less attention in the ideological contest of the bipolar world of the Cold War era. Nevertheless, the expansion in activity of international organisations of all kinds since 1945 has produced the result that a range of standards and mechanisms on human rights operate contemporaneously in Europe affecting the minorities. First of all, the Charter of the United Nations sets out a fundamental standard that human rights shall be safeguarded for every human individual irrespective of “race, sex, *language*, or religion” (emphasis added). This commit-

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<sup>2</sup> Despite the recent interest of the international community in addressing minority rights, several historical treaties may be recalled which some hundreds of years ago contained provisions aimed at providing benefits for individuals of a specific language group. In 1516 a bilateral treaty between France and the Helvetic State provided also some benefits for those Swiss “who speak no language other than German”. A later example could be the Congress of Vienna in 1815, which introduced measures in favour of the use of the Polish language. For more on the history of minority language rights see *de Varennes* (1996: 4-32).

<sup>3</sup> See also *Thornberry* (1991: 25-52).



ment was reinforced later in a number of different documents, among others not only in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, or the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Art. 26.), just like under the European Convention on Human Rights (Art. 14).

But the need to provide positive statements on minority rights, besides the prohibition of indirect and direct discrimination, was formulated already by the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (later known as the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights)<sup>4</sup> when it made a distinction between the concepts of “prevention of discrimination” and “protection of minorities”. Furthermore both within the Council of Europe and CSCE/OSCE there were attempts to recognize the specific rights of minorities.

New impetus for considering the extension of minority rights protection at the international level has emerged only after the deep political changes resulting in the dissolution of communist regimes in Europe after 1989. This period was characterised by the adoption of the OSCE Copenhagen Document (1990), the CoE (Council of Europe) Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) and the CoE European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992).

What seems to be clear is that the idea of minority rights protection has gained a wider recognition at the international level only after 1945. And the need for a definition of the term “minority” did not emerge before it was used in the universalist human rights terminology. In this broader context the question is whether we believe there is a need for a universal definition of the term “minority” or that such definition should remain within the domestic realm of individual states.

Nevertheless, it shall be noted that besides ‘minorities’ in international documents, other terms such as ‘people’ and ‘nation’ are also used interchangeably, without any clear definition. Existing practice in international relations does not always help in identifying

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<sup>4</sup> This UN body ceased to exist in 2006, its functions were taken over by the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee.

clear-cut boundaries of these terms and especially the rights and right-holders associated with them.<sup>5</sup> The case with the definition of ‘minority’ is very similar, inasmuch as the lack of a legal definition offers in many cases a relatively large margin of discretion to governments in selecting those minorities to which they want to provide legal protection.

## 2. Defining the terms

The discussion on the legal protection of minority rights at an international level, primarily regards minorities, which distinguish themselves from the majority on the basis of their “national or ethnic, religious and linguistic” identity (as most UN documents list minorities) requires a basic definition.<sup>6</sup>

It is not the intention here to consider in depth the legal and theoretical problems of defining minorities in general.<sup>7</sup> However, as the brief overview of terminological problems will show below, it is not theoretical or legal considerations which impede the emergence of universal agreement on the definition of fundamental terms in minority protection, especially that of ‘minority,’ but rather political considerations. Noting that the definition of “minority” is surely not a *sine qua non* of the effective protection of minorities OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Max van der Stoep underlined at a conference in Warsaw in 1993: “[t]he existence of a minority is a question of fact and not of definition. [...] I may not have a definition of what constitutes a minority, I would dare to say that I know a minority when I see one.” (Van der Stoep 1999: 45).

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<sup>5</sup> When we consider a peoples’ right to self-determination it depends mostly on political circumstances whether one community can appeal to it successfully or not, in fact its application is outside the jurisdiction of international law (cf. *Musgrave* 1997: 258).

<sup>6</sup> See for example UN General Assembly Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, 18 December 1992, GA A/RES/47/135

<sup>7</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the definition of “minority” see *Packer* 1993; *Pentassuglia* 2000.

In more general terms, the lack of definitions is much more the rule and not the exception in international minority protection (cf.: Pentassuglia 2002: 55-75).

The definition of “minority” is a highly sensitive issue: the inclusion or exclusion of specific groups or individuals from the definition is a crucial point, as it necessarily delimits the addressees of specific policy and legislative instruments (Packer 1996: 123-124). First, one has to face the conundrum of liberal democratic regimes built on the respect for individual human rights and fundamental freedoms, guaranteed to all citizens without any distinction. Second, there is a natural expectation in every legal order to define in objective terms the addressees of specific legal regulations, and it is a truism that minority protection *ipso facto* affects only a part of the population. To meet both pre-requisites has always been a great challenge.

### 2.1. What is a minority? Normative definitions

As it will be seen below, most attempts to define minorities and the membership criteria of belonging to a minority in legal terms are determined to grasp objective conditions, however the limits of subjective justification of belonging to a group are rather contentious.

Reflecting a broader view a remarkable definition was proposed by John Packer (1996: 123) when he argued that, consistent with human rights philosophy, including the democratic principle, a minority is: “*A group of people who freely associate for an established purpose where their shared desire differs from that expressed by majority rule.*”

The most important aspect of the definition offered by Packer is its departure from the attempts at ‘objective’ definitions based on ascribed immutable features or characteristic of human beings. Similar views are expressed by Wiessner, when he finds that “*Individuals feel as part of a community, their upbringing in a certain social configuration as well as their conscious choice make them members of certain groups. All groups are extensions of the ego. They allow for inter-affiliation and inter-identification*” (Wiessner 1996: 218). Based on this observation he continues “[o]ne of the most fundamental rights is the right to associate with others in the pursuit of a common though limited interest that is not necessarily shared by everyone else in the community” (ibid: 220 ). Where the majority determination is

opposite to the object of that interest, then the minority is defined in relation to that determination of the majority.

From a subjective approach, in defining minorities, there may be said to be two fundamental types: 'positive' minorities which are constituted as associates for the purposes of pursuing a shared ideal or life plan which differs from those of the majority, and 'negative' minorities, which are constituted as associates for the purposes of defending themselves against discriminatory treatment or other violations of human rights and, as such, seek to achieve only the fundamental equality they have unjustly been denied. The cohesion of 'negative' minorities typically dissipates once equality has been achieved because no other 'positive' basis of association functions to bind the group (Packer 1996: 124). This difference is reflected also in international instruments, inasmuch the prohibition of discrimination is the primary element of minority rights protection (Pentassuglia 2002: Chapter 4) and positive measures or specific rights for minorities are always seen as additional instruments closely related to the basic principle of non-discrimination.

The diversity of different identities (ethnic or national, cultural, linguistic, etc.) around which the self-awareness of group-belonging may emerge on one side may lead to the conclusion that there is no need for any delimitation of the term "minority", as it was mentioned above (see the position of OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities as quoted above). Nonetheless – and despite the recurrent failures in establishing a legally binding definition in international organisations – the conviction prevails that "*minority protection is only possible if the notion of minority is clarified*" (Ermacora 1983: 271) remained.

After 1945 the first endeavours for a clarification of the term "minority" appeared in the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities on the basis of a memorandum prepared by the Secretary General in 1949 on the Definition and Classification of Minorities. Without reaching a consensus, within the Sub-Commission various working definitions were formulated, with the best still reflecting the classic approaches. According to the definition provided by Capotorti as a special rapporteur, in 1978 (with regard to Article 27 of the ICCPR), a 'minority' is:

[a] group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the state – possess ethnic,

religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their cultures, traditions, religion or language.<sup>8</sup>

Such initiatives, in sight of the important context in which they have been taken and discussed, highlight their significance in identifying the basic elements of the definitions that can be embraced by international law. Pentassuglia argues that the same approach is reflected in the wide use of the term ‘national minority’ in Europe, first of all the CoE and OSCE documents as well (Pentassuglia 2002: 58). The concept applied in this context designates ‘historical’ minorities, i.e. those groups which have a long-standing relation with the state concerned, and as a rule are citizens of that state.

A similar definition was proposed in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly in 1993. The draft additional protocol on the rights of minorities to the European Convention on Human Rights, adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 1 February 1993 by Recommendation 1201, declared under Article 1:

For the purposes of this convention the expression ‘national minority’ refers to a group of persons in a state who a. reside on the territory of that state and are citizens thereof, b. maintain long standing, firm and lasting ties with that state, c. display distinctive ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics, d. are sufficiently representative, although smaller in number than the rest of the population of that state or of a region of that state, e. are motivated by a concern to preserve together that which constitutes their common identity, including their culture, their traditions, their religion or their language.

Since the proposal was not approved by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, it did not have any binding effect on states (Benoit-Rohmer 1996: 13). The new element in this proposal was the subjective factor, namely the will to preserve and maintain the specific identity of the group. It seems logical that only those groups that affirm their differences should benefit from special treatment, unlike those who have voluntarily become assimilated to the majority population (Benoit-Rohmer 1996: 14).

It is important to note that definitions proposed in the international domain have only scarcely been incorporated in domestic legislation. In a European context the example of France or Turkey is

<sup>8</sup> UN Doc E/CN.4/Sub.2/384/Rev.1. 1979. 5-12.

illustrative of the complexity of interpreting minority rights, as both countries deny the existence of minorities on their territory. Both France and Turkey made reservations to Article 27 of ICCPR to the effect that this article was not applicable. On the other side many countries limit the applicability of minority rights to specific groups which are deliberately recognised.<sup>9</sup>

## *2.2. Problems in defining minorities*

### *2.2.1. Citizenship as a pre-condition for protection*

It needs to be underlined that, similarly to the definitions formulated in international documents (cited above), most national legal orders and governmental interpretations in Europe see citizenship as a pre-condition for obtaining a minority status in a country.<sup>10</sup> But this approach leaves the situation of immigrants and other non-citizen residents outside the framework of minority protection, i.e. they cannot be entitled to enjoy the same level of protection of their language, ethnic identity or culture. In many European countries the number of non-citizen residents displaying the basic attributes of belonging to an ethnic or cultural minority in the sense of the definitions quoted above, is steadily increasing and their social integration is often highly problematic. While immigrants increase cultural diversity in the society, their accommodation is often unresolved (cf. Favell 2000). Obviously, on the other hand, ‘traditional’ minorities may well require a differentiated treatment as they usually claim specific rights to their homeland, consequently while states acknowledge their duties towards their citizens belonging to minorities; in general they maintain their exclusive discretion both on offering citizenship to immigrants and on choosing appropriate policies for their social integration (cf. also Bauböck 1994).

<sup>9</sup> See for example the definition applied by the Hungarian Act on the Rights of Nationalities (2011) Art. 1.

<sup>10</sup> See the declarations made with respect to the FCNM (Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities): among EU member states and candidate states which are party to the treaty many limited in separate declarations the application of the FCNM either to long-settled, traditional minorities (Denmark, Germany, Slovenia, and Sweden) or to their citizens (Austria, Estonia, Luxembourg, Poland). CoE Treaty Office List of Declarations made with respect to Treaty no. 157 < <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ListeDeclarations.asp?NT=157&CM=1&DF=7/27/04&CL=ENG&VL=1> > (Last accessed on 11 May 2010).

Besides the social and political problems, from a legal point of view the expressive limitation of minority rights protection to members of minorities holding the citizenship of the country is problematic, because minority rights are in principle formulated under the broad umbrella of human rights protection, which are seen in the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) “*the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family*.”<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, UN documents on minority rights do not prescribe citizenship for the enjoyment of these rights either. It is indeed all too easy for states to manipulate their citizenship legislation so as to exclude certain population groups that would otherwise qualify as a minority (inter alia Thornberry 1993: 28-30). Furthermore this requirement is problematic for the Roma (Gilbert 1992: 72), as well as when the borders of existing states change due to secessions or associations (see from the past years the cases of Kosovo, Abkhazia or South-Ossetia). The UN Human Rights Committee has in any event adopted a rather liberal stance in its General Comment on Article 27 ICCPR<sup>12</sup> in that it does not require members of a minority group to be citizens of the state of residence. The related requirement of having lasting ties with the country of residence is also increasingly questioned. Even so, the prevailing views in Europe clearly link minority rights to citizenship.

For instance even the EU formulated its concerns on Baltic States’ discriminatory citizenship policies towards their Russian populations living on their territory, within the framework of assessing these states’ compliance with minority protection criteria.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.2.2. National minorities...

Another difference is linked with the fact that, while United Nations normative texts list four categories of minorities: national, ethnic,

<sup>11</sup> Proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 General Assembly resolution 217 A (III)

<sup>12</sup> General Comment No. 23: The rights of minorities (Art. 27): 08/04/94. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.5, (General Comments) adopted at the Fiftieth Session in 1994.

<sup>13</sup> See for example European Commission Progress Reports from the Commission on Progress towards Accession by Latvia 1998: 11 p., 1999: 17 p., and 2001: 27 p.

religious and linguistic,<sup>14</sup> the texts adopted by the OSCE and the Council of Europe mention only “national minorities”. The use of only one category in the European context, however does not imply a limitation of the rights assigned to national minorities: for example as the CSCE Charter of Paris for a New Europe formulated that “[...] *the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities will be protected [...]*” and such a broader interpretation of the national minorities was adopted by the OSCE High Commissioner as well (see above).

The reason for the dominant usage of “national minorities” in a European context lies in the above-mentioned fears attached to minority issues in Europe, which clearly suggest a link between “national” identity and the concept of nation-state.<sup>15</sup> This cautious approach is reflected in international documents, in separate provisions emphasizing that the rights of (national) minorities shall not be interpreted “*as implying any right to engage in any activity or perform any act contrary to the fundamental principles of international law and in particular of the sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of States.*”<sup>16</sup>

The primacy of national identity in political mobilisation was specifically noticeable in the CEE (Central and Eastern European) transition countries in the 1990s.

After 1989 the process of democratisation developed parallel with the strong nation-building endeavours of many CEE states (see

<sup>14</sup> See Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, G.A. res. 47/135, 47 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 210, U.N. Doc. A/47/49 (1992). Art. 27 of the ICCPR also refers to “[e]thnic, religious or linguistic minorities” reflecting a similarly wider approach.

<sup>15</sup> The misleading identification of “nation” with “state” was recently reflected in a minority-related context in the CoE Parliamentary Assembly Res.1335 (2003) on the “*Preferential treatment of national minorities by the kin-state: the case of the Hungarian Law on Hungarians Living in Neighbouring Countries (‘Magyars’) of 19 June 2001*” para. 10. “[t]here is a feeling that in these neighbouring countries the definition of the concept of “nation” in the preamble to the law could under certain circumstances be interpreted – though this interpretation is not correct – as non-acceptance of the state borders which divide the members of the ‘nation’ (...)”, However, the Resolution also underlined that “[t]he Assembly notes that up until now there is no common European legal definition of the concept of ‘nation’.” Ibid. See also Brass 1991: 19-23.

<sup>16</sup> As Art. 21 of the FCNM is formulated.



Cordell 1999). Many expected that democracy, the ‘rule of people’ could mean nothing else than the ‘rule of the nation’ in a sense that, crudely speaking, ‘majority takes all’. Civic homogeneity was often required without regard of ethnic heterogeneity (cf. Richards 1999: 16-17). As all ethnic or national minorities are by definition in a structural minority position in their country, i.e. they could never obtain power through democratic elections, the rule of the majority may indeed be utilised also against minorities. As Eide noted one danger is the *“exclusion from the circle of citizens, through ethnically based citizenship legislation, of members of some resident minorities who therefore are not made partners in the exercise of democracy. The other is the danger that majorities use their democratic power to give their own members privileges”* (Eide 1996: 158). Fears that in the new CEE democracies, the ethnic majority might use democratic power and institutions against minorities, potentially leading to ethnic conflict, were not baseless. While the introduction of democratic pluralism has been closely linked to the international support of human rights protection in general, it is rather obvious that such support for CEE states included the rights of national or ethnic minorities in particular (Eide 1996).

In the context of the FCNM (Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities), at the drafting of the Convention there have been debates on the need for a definition of the term “minority” but due to lack of consensus no such definition was included in the document. Nevertheless many signatory states adhere to the concept of minority as it was defined in the CoE PA Res. 1201 (1993) and the FCNM Advisory Committee also endorsed the view that a broad understanding of “national minorities” (i.e. including cultural, linguistic, religious identities as well) can be assumed as a part of regional customary international law. The rulings of international treaty bodies also demonstrate the irrelevance of detailed definitions. Concerning the implementation of Article 27 of the ICCPR, the Human Rights Committee has held that it applies not only to persons belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities but also to indigenous peoples. The FCNM Advisory Committee (AC) has followed the same approach. It has stressed that the state parties must determine the scope of application of the FCNM on their territory in the absence of a definition in the FCNM itself. „In the opinion

of the AC on the one hand, parties are granted a certain margin of discretion in adapting the normative regulations to the specific circumstances in their countries. On the other hand this must be exercised in accordance with the general principles of international law and the fundamental principles set out in Article 3 of the FCNM". (Weller 2005: 111)

The embarrassment around who is entitled to minority rights emerged eloquently in the context of the European Union as well. Since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the term "minority" appeared in the primary EU law without any further qualifications. Quite surprisingly the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union adopted an extremely broad approach in its report on minorities in the EU. It reads as follows: "Depending on the context, it refers to persons belonging to ethnic minorities as well as those belonging to linguistic or national minorities. In certain instances the report also touches upon the wider question of how to manage the ethnic diversity of our societies, including issues faced by EU citizens moving from one Member State to another Member State and therefore into another social and cultural context."<sup>17</sup>

In conclusion one can observe, that international documents on minority rights protection neither provide a definition of minorities nor set up clear-cut preferences on which minorities would be entitled to international and domestic protection. In principle international documents tend to accept the variety of different minority identities and in legal terms they do not make distinctions between immigrant or 'traditional' minorities. Nonetheless in the implementation of these international documents European states often apply such limitations. And recent international political initiatives to tackle minority problems in the CEE have expressively focused on traditional, autochthonous national or ethnic minorities.

This supposed contradiction in international legal and political approaches to minority issues, besides positioning minority rights among fundamental human rights, reveal also a marked preventive

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<sup>17</sup> *Report. Respect for and protection of persons belonging to minorities 2008-2010.* Vienna, Fundamental Rights Agency, 2011. 9. p.

content,<sup>18</sup> and shed light on the duality of theoretical justifications of minority rights protection.

## 2. The ambivalent approach of international organisations to minority issues

Under international law, international organisations are by rule formed by states, consequently the ambiguities characterising the treatment of minorities in general, and the conceptualisation of minority rights in particular, are necessarily reflected in the documents and actions of international organisations the will states of.

The fundamental principles of the present international system are normatively based upon the classic nation-state ideal, as unitary, politically independent and sovereign entities of international relations. Thus, while human rights norms had become fully internationalised, their implementation and enforcement remained almost completely national. The values identified in human rights protection are common, but their realisation primarily belongs to national competence. It implies that despite the strong internationalisation of human rights protection, in practice the centrality of states has not been questioned in this field. This is particularly relevant for the international protection of minority rights. First of all, the establishment of peoples' right to self-determination, as a universal human

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<sup>18</sup> Security concerns are apparent in the mandate of international bodies, which have been purposely set up for dealing with minority issues. The position of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities was created to be an institution of “preventive diplomacy” (Van der Stoep 1999). As the 1992 CSCE Helsinki Document on “The Challenges of Change” defined the mandate of the High Commissioner under II.(2): “*The High Commissioner will act under the aegis of the CSO [Committee of Senior Officials] and will thus be an instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage.*” This approach is clearly not limited to European institutions: in a similar way the discussion forum provided by the UN Working Group on Minorities between governments and minorities has one of its primary goals to settle disputes and encourage dialogue (Meijknecht 2001: 201-203). The working group reviews the implementation of the 1992 UN Declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, promotes dialogue between minorities and governments, and recommends measures which may serve to diffuse minority tensions. See also <<http://www.unhcr.ch/minorities/group.htm>> Last accessed on 10 April 2010.

right, often surfaces in debates over minority claims for any form of political control over a territory or a group of citizens (i.e. the minority community).

Historically such claims can go as far as claiming independent statehood for a particular territory, which strongly contradicts the interests of the existing club of nation-states. The existence of national minorities in a states system that purports to be based upon the universal human right of national self-determination evoked different international responses in different historical moments. In the post-WWII regime of human rights protection, one of the answers was the reinforcement of individual human rights at an international level. The problems of national minorities can be addressed in terms of individual discrimination and equality, thereby provoking international requirements for states to remove any legal or political barriers of individual membership in a minority group by guaranteeing equality of civil and political rights to all its citizens. Nevertheless, as it usually happens, the state cannot provide an identity neutral environment for its citizens in exercising their civil and political rights, thus substantial minority claims (for preserving minority identity) require more than formal equality. It also implies, that states, and international organisations face a challenge in defining identity-sensitive specific rights, without questioning the historical foundations of existing nation-states. Ideas on shared sovereignty, multi-level governance, and autonomy are only marginally present in international documents.

In sum, international documents on minority rights regularly reinforce both aspects of minority protection: acknowledging that specific rights of minorities form an integral part of universal human rights, while on the other hand stressing that the exercise of minority rights shall contribute to political stability and peace, and shall not in any way infringe the sovereignty of states.<sup>19</sup> The duality of polit-

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<sup>19</sup> As the CSCE Copenhagen Document (1990) stated under art. 30. that “[The participating states] *reaffirm that respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities as part of universally recognized human rights is an essential factor for peace, justice, stability and democracy in the participating States.*” But the Document also reaffirms under art. 37 that “*None of these commitments may be interpreted as implying any right to engage in any activity or perform any action in contravention of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, other obligations under international law or the provisions of the Final Act, including the principle of territorial integrity of States.*”

ical (security) and normative-ideational (human rights) considerations necessarily poses a quandary in the accommodation of minority claims, and minority rights always trigger a combined approach. Indeed, the indefinite formulation of specific minority rights in international documents is also a reflection of the security concerns of states, in that states are not inclined to develop at the international level a consistent and effectively claimable set of rights for minorities, similar to the existing regime of international human rights protection. Thus states maintain a wide range of choices in defining their minority policies while still remaining in line with international principles of human rights protection.

## Conclusions

But this dual (security and human rights) approach poses a conceptual dilemma: in principle if human rights are accepted as being universal and equal for all, and all specific minority rights are considered as being an integral part of universal human rights, no security interest could determine the extent to which they are protected. This means that in theory neither the denial, nor the extension of minority rights – from a human rights protectionist approach – could be justified by political considerations or security interests. Considering that in principle all human rights receive effective protection because they are rooted in the dignity of all human beings, a minimum consensus on a set of inviolable minority rights – which go beyond the right to existence and the mere prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of national or ethnic belonging – could be expected to develop at the international level. The rational, utilitarian approach standing behind most security instruments and mechanisms in international relations can hardly be transplanted to the area of human rights protection. As the authoritative limitation or extension of human rights of individual persons in proportion of the *presupposed* danger they may pose to the society is hardly acceptable, so governments and international organisations should not deny the same consistency in their approach to specific communities of individuals, i.e. to minorities.

An additional question in this regard: who is entitled to protect minority rights? Taking into account the great political sensitivity of

defining minority rights, the primary responsibility for the protection of minorities lies on the state, where they live. Nevertheless, as minority rights form a part of the international human rights regime, and as international organisations – independently from the ambiguities characterising their interests in doing so – increasingly participate in the promotion of minority rights, their involvement is also unquestionable. Moreover, defining minority rights as universal human rights may imply also that states interested in the amelioration of the situation of particular minorities (usually kin-states) can take actions to support them.

As a matter of fact, finding a general definition of “minorities” at international level remains unlikely for the future for two main reasons:

- first, the dual justification of minority rights protection leaves opportunities for States in their domestic regulations to take security and assimilatory (for achieving “national unity”) considerations into account in implementing international obligations in this field, thus the control over the implementation of minority rights and over the delimitation of the addressees of such rights remains crucially important for individual states;
- secondly, as it is evident from the above, the differences between the needs of minorities and the differences between their social, historical, cultural background make rather difficult if not impossible the elaboration of a universally acceptable definition of the term “minority”.

As a final conclusion, besides the theoretical interest in finding a definition, all political and legal endeavours for a universal codification of the term “minority” in international law seems to divert attention from the implementation of minority rights rather than attempting to create a foundation for them. Furthermore it seems to be clear that a normative definition of minorities at the international level may be only useful if it builds on the recognition of different treatments required by traditional minorities which have a long-standing relationship with their state and thereby help to avoid mixing such claims (formally acknowledged by international minority rights norms) from the problems of the social integration of immigrant communities.

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# **Demography. Censuses**



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*Tamás Kiss – Gergő Barna*

## **Landscape after the census. Hungarian population in Transylvania in the first decade of the 21<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>**

In 2011, Romania conducted its third census since the political change-over. At the national level, the most important question of the census was the actual size of the population. According to official publications delivered by the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) on 1 January 2011, Romania had a population of 21.413 million. However, NIS calculated emigration flows registered by the Romanian authorities which reflected only a very tiny segment of effective out-migration. According to World Bank statistics, in 2010, 2.8 million Romanian citizens resided abroad.<sup>2</sup> In the time period between 2001 and 2011, the number of emigrants registered by the Romanian authorities was about 128 000 persons. If we look at the flow statistics of the main host countries, we can see that the Romanian emigration statistics have captured less than 10 percent of the legal outflows from Romania. As a consequence, NIS highly overestimated the country's population.

The census was also important from the perspective of ethnic elites. These elites were concerned to demonstrate the numerical strength of the communities they claimed to represent. Accordingly, the organizations of the two considerable ethnic minorities of the country, the Hungarians and the Roma alike, conducted a census identity campaign. From a statistical point of view, the uncertainty was greater in the case of the Roma. In 2002, 535 thousand persons identified themselves as Roma, but virtually no one accepted this figure. The Romani Criss, a

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<sup>1</sup> Our analysis of the preliminary data of the 2011 census was published at greater length in the Workshop Studies series of the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities (NKI) of Cluj-Napoca (*Kiss-Barna* 2012). The survey serving as the basis of this study was also carried out in cooperation with the NKI.

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTDECPROSPECTS/0,,contentMDK:22803131~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:476883,00.html>.

Roma organization engaged in the identity campaign, spoke about 1.8-2.5 million Romanian Roma while experts estimated their numbers at 1.8-2 million (Preda–Zamfir 2002). This also meant that Roma organisations had a greater incentive to mobilize the Roma population to claim their place in the census. In the case of ethnic Hungarians, the situation was less uncertain since the 2002 census data were accepted unanimously by the Hungarian elite. Demographers projected a population decrease, estimating the number of Hungarians at 1.265-1.290 million.<sup>3</sup> More importantly, the question was whether the loss in total figures would mean a decrease in their proportion of the population as well.

### **Preliminary census results(from a Hungarian perspective)<sup>4</sup>**

#### *Some general figures*

According to the preliminary results, the total population of Romania went down by 12.2 percent in the inter-census period. The decrease of the population was more extensive in the former territories of the Old Romanian Kingdom (Regat) than in the former Hungarian territories of the Habsburg Monarchy (Transylvania, used in a broader sense, including Banat and the Hungarian-Romanian border region).

#### *Changes in the population size between 1992-2011*

| Regions      | Resident population |            |            | Change: absolute numbers |            | Change %  |           |
|--------------|---------------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
|              | 1992                | 2002       | 2011       | Change                   | Change     | Change    | Change    |
|              |                     |            |            | 1992–2002                | 2002–2011  | 1992–2002 | 2002–2011 |
| Regat        | 15,086,722          | 14,459,241 | 12,567,042 | -627,481                 | -1,892,199 | -4.2%     | -13.1%    |
| Transylvania | 7,723,313           | 7,221,733  | 6,475,894  | -501,580                 | -745,839   | -6.5%     | -10.3%    |
| Romania      | 22,810,035          | 21,680,974 | 19,042,936 | -1,129,061               | -2,638,038 | -4.9%     | -12.2%    |

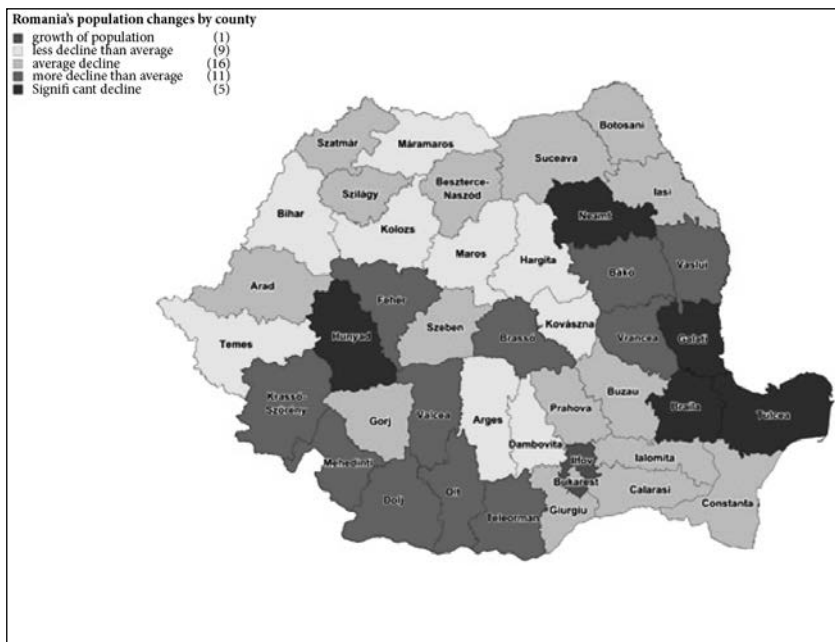
Source: INS

<sup>3</sup> Csata-Kiss 2007; Kapitány-Kiss 2007.

<sup>4</sup> The preliminary results of the 2011 census (based on the cumulative tables filled out by the enumerators) were published on 2 February, 2012. We have prepared a database by assigning the local administrative unit-level (LAU 2 – communes/towns) data to the results of 1992 and 2002. The first part of the analysis is based on that. The most important difference between preliminary and final results is that while the latter is elaborated after the processing of the individual questionnaires, the former is prepared on the basis of the cumulative tables submitted by the enumerators. In Romania, the CELR form (ethnicity, mother tongue, religion) contained all the information about ethnicity.

The eastern/south-eastern counties of the country (Tulcea, Neamţ, Brăila, Galaţi) suffered the biggest losses. Within Transylvania, the most significant loss was registered in Southern Transylvania (Hunedoara, Caraş-Severin, Alba, and Braşov counties – in Hungarian: Hunyad, Krassó-Szörény, Fehér, and Brassó counties). The only county to see a population growth was Ilfov. Furthermore, the population decrease was relatively mild in Timiş (Temes) and Cluj (Kolozs) counties as well as in Harghita (Hargita) and Covasna (Kovászna) counties, which have a Hungarian majority. The population loss remained well below the average in Mureş (Maros) and Bihor (Bihar) counties, also having a significant Hungarian population.

*Demographic evolution of the population size by counties in Romania between 2002-2011*



Source: INS

It was also an open question whether the proportion of the urban population would continue to fall. The urban population shrank by 15 percent, whereas the rural population “only” by 8 percent. There are complex migratory processes behind this phenomenon. On the one

hand, a suburbanisation process took place, indeed: the residents of the big cities moved out of the metropolitan areas in great numbers. That is what explains the single population growth of Ilfov county surrounding Bucharest or that Feneş (Szászfenes), a settlement near Cluj (Kolozsvár), mushroomed into a commuter town with a population exceeding 20 thousand. On the other hand, and partly contrary to the mainstream hypotheses of the academic literature<sup>5</sup>, international out-migration also took a greater number of the urban population.

In spite of the seemingly favourable regional distribution, the preliminary results of the census showed a slight decrease in the proportion of Hungarians at the national level and an unquestionable drop in Transylvania. The Roma population increased in size and proportion, but to a much smaller extent than in the previous censuses. Out of the other ethnicities, only the Armenians grew in number.

*The size and the proportion of ethnic minorities in Romania, 1992-2011*

| <b>Ethnicity</b>        | <b>1992</b>       | <b>%</b>       | <b>2002</b>       | <b>%</b>       | <b>2011 ↓</b>     | <b>%</b>       |
|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Romanian                | 20,408,542        | 89.47%         | 19,399,597        | 89.48%         | 16,869,816        | 88.59%         |
| Hungarian               | 1,624,959         | 7.12%          | 1,431,807         | 6.60%          | 1,237,746         | 6.50%          |
| Roma                    | 401,087           | 1.76%          | 535,140           | 2.47%          | 619,007           | 3.25%          |
| Ukrainian               | 65,764            | 0.29%          | 61,098            | 0.28%          | 51,703            | 0.27%          |
| German                  | 119,462           | 0.52%          | 59,764            | 0.28%          | 36,884            | 0.19%          |
| Turkish                 | 29,832            | 0.13%          | 32,098            | 0.15%          | 28,226            | 0.15%          |
| Lipovan                 | 38,606            | 0.17%          | 35,791            | 0.17%          | 23,864            | 0.13%          |
| Tatar                   | 24,596            | 0.11%          | 23,935            | 0.11%          | 20,464            | 0.11%          |
| Serb                    | 29,408            | 0.13%          | 22,561            | 0.10%          | 18,461            | 0.10%          |
| Slovak                  | 19,594            | 0.09%          | 17,226            | 0.08%          | 13,936            | 0.07%          |
| Bulgarian               | 9,851             | 0.04%          | 8,025             | 0.04%          | 7,471             | 0.04%          |
| Croat                   | 4,085             | 0.02%          | 6,807             | 0.03%          | 5,482             | 0.03%          |
| Greek                   | 3,940             | 0.02%          | 6,472             | 0.03%          | 3,650             | 0.02%          |
| Jewish                  | 8,955             | 0.04%          | 5,785             | 0.03%          | 3,153             | 0.02%          |
| Polish                  | 4,232             | 0.02%          | 3,559             | 0.02%          | 2,583             | 0.01%          |
| Czech                   | 5,797             | 0.03%          | 3,941             | 0.02%          | 2,518             | 0.01%          |
| Armenian                | 1,957             | 0.01%          | 1,780             | 0.01%          | 2,090             | 0.01%          |
| Other ethnicities       | 8,602             | 0.04%          | 23,647            | 0.11%          | 36,696            | 0.19%          |
| <i>Non-response</i>     | 766               | 0.00%          | 1,941             | 0.01%          | 59,186            | 0.31%          |
| <b>Total population</b> | <b>22,810,035</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>21,680,974</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>19,042,936</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

Source: INS

<sup>5</sup> Analyses have pointed out that in Romania, the primary source of international migration is derived from villages (Sandu 2005; Horváth 2008).

As a new phenomenon, there were a significant number of respondents who did not disclose their ethnicity. This could be due more to methodological (rather than socio-psychological) factors. On the one hand, it was the first time that enumerators had to point out specifically that it was not mandatory to supply data concerning ethno-cultural features (ethnicity, mother tongue, religion). On the other hand, when the responses of a person were given by other than household members, this question was skipped altogether. On the basis of the commune/town level data, we can assume that about 4,671 persons who had identified themselves as Hungarians in the 2002 census did not disclose their ethnicity in 2011.<sup>6</sup>

### **The ethnic Hungarian population of Transylvania in light of the 2011 census**

Before examining the factors that have influenced the demographic evolution of the Hungarian population, we will devote some space to the presentation of the census results by region<sup>7</sup>, and type<sup>8</sup> and ethnic composition of the administrative unit respectively<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> See *Kiss-Barna* 2011 for more on the subject.

<sup>7</sup> We have set up six regions: (1) Banat: Arad, Timiș and Caraș-Severin counties (Bánság: Arad, Temes, and Krassó-Szörény) ; (2) Southern Transylvania: Brașov, Alba, Hunedoara, and Sibiu counties (Brassó, Fehér, Hunyad, and Szeben) ; (3) Northern Transylvania: Bistrița-Năsăud and Maramureș counties (Beszterce-Naszód and Máramaros); (4) Central Transylvania: Cluj (Kolozs) and the area of Mureș (Maros) county that did not belong to the former Marosszék, completed by Târgu Mureș (Marosvásárhely) and its surrounding area; (5) Partium: Bihor, Satu Mare, and Sălaj counties (Bihar, Szatmár, and Szilágy); (6) Szeklerland (Székelyföld): Harghita (Hargita) and Covasna (Kovászna) counties, completed by the former Marosszék part of Mureș (Maros) without Târgu Mureș (Marosvásárhely) and its surrounding area.

<sup>8</sup> We have set up six categories: (1) villages; (2) villages in the metropolitan area of cities with more than 100 thousand inhabitants; (3) small towns with less than 10 thousand inhabitants; (4) small towns with 10-30 thousand inhabitants; (5) middle towns with 30-100 thousand inhabitants; (6) cities.

<sup>9</sup> Our categories: (1) villages and towns of Hungarian dominance, where the proportion of Hungarians is more than 75 percent; (2) villages and towns with a Hungarian majority; (3) plurality minority where the proportion of Hungarians is between 35-50 percent; (4) minority where the proportion of Hungarians is between 20-35 percent; (5) communities on their way to becoming a diaspora where the proportion of Hungarians is between 10-20 percent; (6) diaspora communities

*Changes in the size and proportion of the Hungarian population by counties*

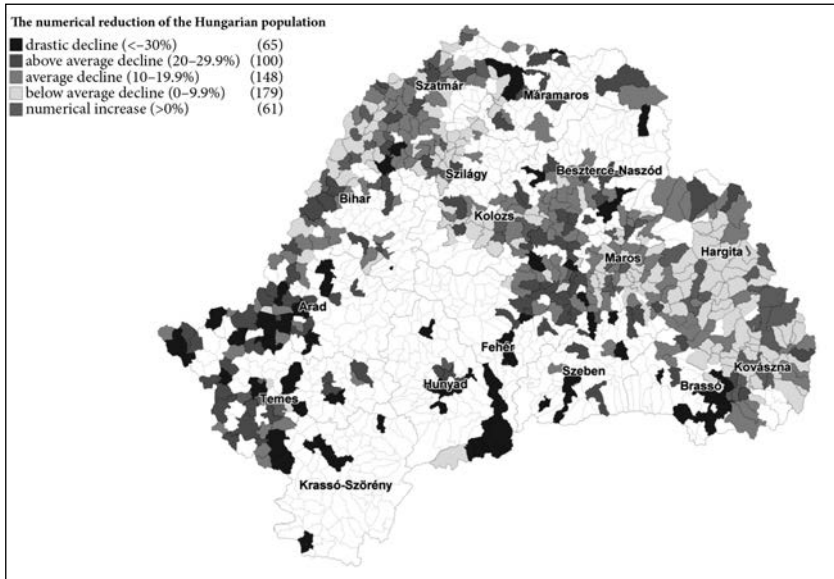
| County                             | 1992             |             | 2002             |             | 2011             |             | Changes in the absolute numbers and proportion: |                 |               |               |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|---|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
|                                    | Size:            | %           | Size:            | %           | Size:            | %           | Size: 1992–2002                                 | Size: 2002–2011 | % 1992–2002   | % 2002–2011   |
|                                    |                  |             |                  |             |                  |             |   |                 |               |               |
| Harghita (Hargita)                 | 295,104          | 84.7        | 276,038          | 84.6        | 258,615          | 84.8        | -19,066   | -17,423         | -6.5%         | -6.3%         |
| Covasna (Kovászna)                 | 175,502          | 75.2        | 164,158          | 73.8        | 151,787          | 73.6        | -11,344   | -12,371         | -6.5%         | -7.5%         |
| Bihar (Bihar)                      | 181,703          | 28.4        | 155,829          | 26.0        | 138,441          | 25.2        | -25,874   | -17,388         | -14.2%        | -11.2%        |
| Sălaj (Szilág)                     | 63,151           | 23.7        | 57,167           | 23.0        | 50,659           | 23.2        | -5,984  | -6,508          | -9.5%         | -11.4%        |
| Mureș (Maros)                      | 252,651          | 41.4        | 228,275          | 39.3        | 200,989          | 37.8        | -24,376   | -27,286         | -9.6%         | -12.0%        |
| Satu Mare (Szatmár)                | 140,392          | 35.0        | 129,258          | 35.2        | 113,541          | 34.5        | -11,134   | -15,717         | -7.9%         | -12.2%        |
| Cluj (Kolozs)                      | 146,186          | 19.9        | 122,301          | 17.4        | 103,457          | 15.7        | -23,885   | -18,844         | -16.3%        | -15.4%        |
| Bistrița-Năsăud (Beszterce-Naszód) | 21,098           | 6.5         | 18,349           | 5.9         | 14,773           | 5.3         | -2,749  | -3,576          | -13.0%        | -19.5%        |
| Brașov (Brassó)                    | 63,558           | 9.9         | 50,956           | 8.7         | 39,275           | 7.8         | -12,602   | -11,681         | -19.8%        | -22.9%        |
| Alba (Fehér)                       | 24,765           | 6.0         | 20,684           | 5.4         | 15,870           | 4.8         | -4,081  | -4,814          | -16.5%        | -23.3%        |
| Arad (Arad)                        | 61,011           | 12.5        | 49,291           | 10.7        | 37,067           | 9.1         | -11,720   | -12,224         | -19.2%        | -24.8%        |
| Maramureș (Máramaros)              | 54,902           | 10.2        | 46,300           | 9.1         | 34,781           | 7.5         | -8,602  | -11,519         | -15.7%        | -24.9%        |
| Sibiu (Szeben)                     | 19,309           | 4.3         | 15,344           | 3.6         | 10,893           | 2.9         | -3,965  | -4,451          | -20.5%        | -29.0%        |
| Timiș (Temes)                      | 62,866           | 9.0         | 50,556           | 7.5         | 35,294           | 5.4         | -12,310   | -15,262         | -19.6%        | -30.2%        |
| Hunedoara (Hunyad)                 | 33,849           | 6.2         | 25,388           | 5.2         | 16,219           | 4.1         | -8,461  | -9,169          | -25.0%        | -36.1%        |
| Caras-Severin (Krassó-Szörény)     | 7,876            | 2.1         | 5,824            | 1.7         | 3,276            | 1.2         | -2,052  | -2,548          | -26.1%        | -43.8%        |
| <b>Transylvania</b>                | <b>1,603,923</b> | <b>20.8</b> | <b>1,415,718</b> | <b>19.6</b> | <b>1,224,937</b> | <b>18.9</b> | <b>-189,205</b>                                 | <b>-190,781</b> | <b>-11.7%</b> | <b>-13.5%</b> |
| <b>Romania</b>                     | <b>1,624,959</b> | <b>7.1</b>  | <b>1,431,807</b> | <b>6.6</b>  | <b>1,237,746</b> | <b>6.5</b>  | <b>-193,152</b>                                 | <b>-194,061</b> | <b>-11.9%</b> | <b>-13.6%</b> |

Source: INS

with a proportion Hungarian below 10 percent, but with more than 100 Hungarian residents. (As it follows from the above), we had two additional settlement categories that were not included in the analysis about Hungarians: (7) persons living in a diaspora, i.e. settlements where the proportion of Hungarians is below 10 percent and their number is below 100; (8) settlements without a Hungarian population.



*Changes in the number of Hungarians by communes/towns in Transylvania between 2002-2011*



Source: INS

Demographic processes affecting the Hungarian population vary significantly by regions/counties. We can classify the Transylvanian counties into four groups. The first group (the Szeklerland ethnic block) is constituted by Harghita (Harghita) and Covasna (Kovászna) counties where the Hungarian population is characterized by demographic trends far more advantageous than the national average. Here we can see stability in terms of ethnic ratios (the proportion of Hungarians slightly increased in Harghita (Harghita) while it went down slightly in Covasna (Kovászna)). In Bihor (Bihar), Sălaj (Szilágy), Mureş (Maros), and Satu Mare (Szatmár) counties (that we might consider as a sort of ethnic contact zone), the demographic evolution of the Hungarian population was about the same as the national average. In these counties, the proportion loss of Hungarians is not significant; Sălaj (Szilágy) registered even a population increase. In the case of Cluj (Kolozs), Bistriţa-Năşăud (Beszterce-Naszód), Braşov (Brassó), Alba (Fehér), Arad (Arad), and Maramureş (Máramaros) counties (are in the process of becoming more dispersed), the demographic trends of the Hungarian population are less favour-

able here than on the national level, and the decline of the proportion of Hungarians is also considerable. As for Sibiu (Szeben), Timiș (Temes), Hunedoara (Hunyad), and Caraș-Severin (Krassó-Szörény) counties, they are characterized by extreme demographic erosion (surpassing demographic projections).

*Changes in the size and proportion of the Hungarian population by counties, 2002-2011*

|   |  | Changes in absolute numbers (%) 2002-2011 | Changes in the proportion of the proportions compared to each other 2002-2011 |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Region</b>                               | Szeklerland (Székelyföld)                        | -6.6%                                     | -0.5%   |
|   | Partium  | -11.6%                                    | -2.2%   |
|   | Central Transylvania                             | -14.7%                                    | -8.0%   |
|   | Northern Transylvania                            | -23.3%                                    | -13.1%  |
|   | Southern Transylvania                            | -27.1%                                    | -12.9%  |
|   | Banat (Bánság)                                   | -28.4%                                    | -21.2%  |
| <b>Ethnic composition of the settlement</b> | Hungarian dominance (above 75%)                  | -5.6%                                     | -1.5%   |
|   | Majority (50-75%)                                | -6.3%                                     | 0.3%  |
|   | Minority plurality (35-50%)                      | -15.1%                                    | -5.3%   |
|   | Minority (20-35%)                                | -16.6%                                    | -10.6%  |
|   | Community being disperzed (10-20)                | -22.9%                                    | -12.9%  |
|   | Disperzed community (below 10, >100 inhabitants) | -31.7%                                    | -21.3%  |
| <b>Type of settlement</b>                   | <b>Village</b>                                   | -7.2%                                     | -0.7%   |
|   | Village in a metropolis zone                     | -1.8%                                     | -12.9%  |
|   | Small town (below 10 thousand inhabitants)       | -12.4%                                    | -0.2%   |
|   | Small town (10-30 thousand inhabitants)          | -17.5%                                    | -2.9%   |
|   | Town (30-100 thousand inhabitants)               | -17.9%                                    | -0.8%   |
|   | City (above 100 thousand inhabitants)            | -23.1%                                    | -13.2%  |

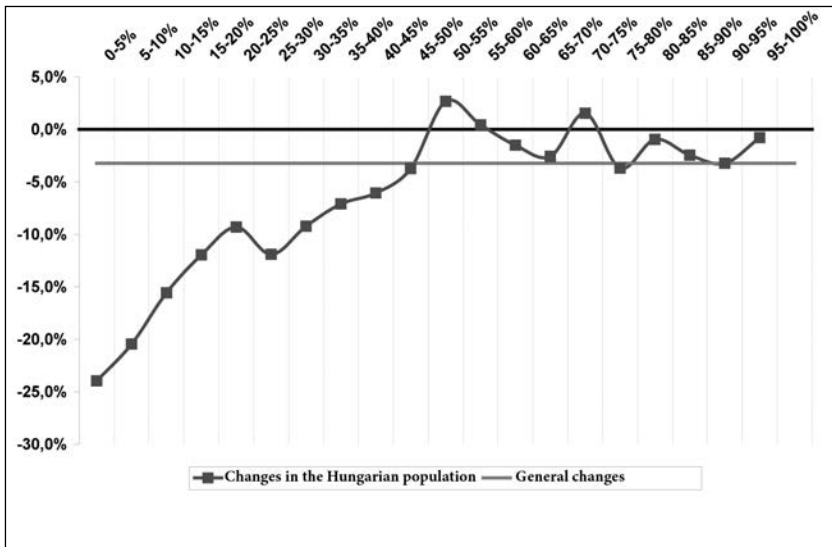
Source: INS

The same can be observed according to regional categories as well. In Szeklerland (Székelyföld), the Hungarian population loss was 7 percent, which is well below the national average and it is equal to the changes between 2002-2011. In Partium, the size of the

Hungarian population also evolved similarly to the national average, and to the trends between 1992-2002. In Central Transylvania, however, the trends are less favourable than the national average. At the same time, the the so called diaspora regions are struggling with a serious problem: not only is the Hungarian population loss much more dramatic there than the national trends, but the demographic erosion seems to have accelerated as well in comparison with the results of the previous decade.

The proportion of Hungarians in the population has a decisive effect on demographic trends. The lower the ratio of Hungarians in a given settlement at the beginning of the inter-census period, the greater the population loss. In the settlements of Hungarian dominance or majority, the population decrease remained under the national average, whereas in the case of settlements where the proportion of Hungarians was lower this figure exceeded 30 percent and 20 percent, respectively.

*Changes in the proportion of the Hungarian population between 2002-2011. (Axis "y" indicates the categories by the proportion of Hungarians in 2002, while axis "x" shows the changes in proportion of Hungarians between 2002-2011.)*



Source: INS

With respect to the changes in proportions, the critical value seemed to be the initial status of 40 percent. Where the proportion of Hungarians was higher than that in 2002, the demographic processes of the ethnic groups of the past ten years were relatively balanced and, as a consequence the proportion of Hungarians remained constant. However, where the proportion of Hungarians was below 40 percent, a further decrease was more likely to happen.

Trends by settlement types are similar to those observed between 1992-2002. The size of the settlements and Hungarian population loss were directly related: the bigger the settlement size, the greater the loss. While at the level of villages, the loss amounted to 7.4 percent between 2002-2011, it reached 23.1 percent in the cities. Villages located in the metropolitan area of cities with 100 thousand inhabitants were the least affected by Hungarian population loss, but that did not mean an increase in their proportion over all.

The outcome of these processes is a significant modification of the internal structure of the Hungarian population in Transylvania. Between 1992-2011, the proportion of those living in cities with more than 100 thousand inhabitants dropped from 26 percent to 21 percent, while the proportion of those living in communes (located outside the metropolitan area) grew from 38 percent to 44 percent. The fact that a growing ratio of the community is concentrated in rural-type settlements has a negative effect on the social position of Hungarians. Moreover, the development of ethnic Hungarian “blocs” in Transylvania should also be noted as a phenomenon. In comparison with 2002, the proportion of those living in an administrative unit of the Hungarian majority grew from 48 percent to 53 percent, and the Székelys – as opposed to 33 percent in 1992 and 35 percent in 2002 – now make up 38 percent of the total Hungarian community of Transylvania.

### **Factors influencing the demographic evolution of the Hungarian population in Transylvania**

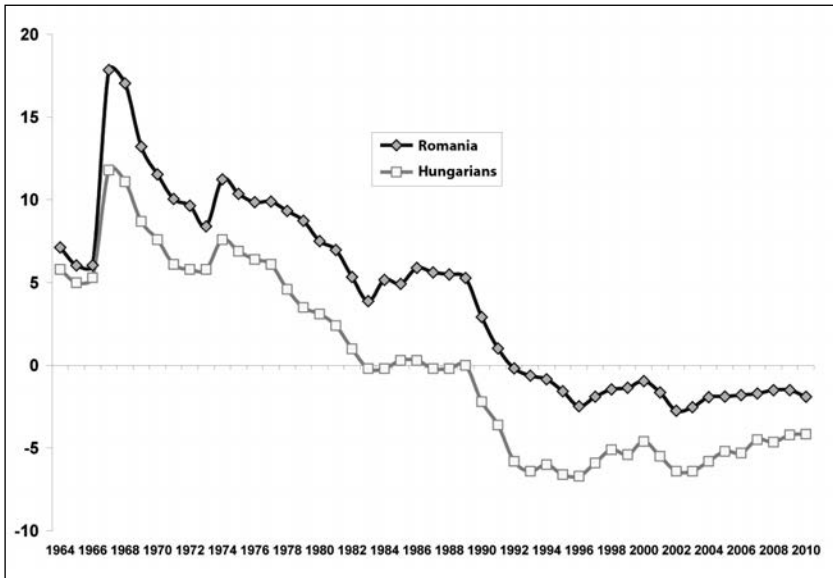
In the following, we will present the demographic processes that affected the Hungarian population trends between 2002-2011. We distinguish between the following factors:

- (1) Natural growth, i.e. the difference between the number of births and deaths;
- (2) Intergenerational assimilation
- (3) Change of (census) ethnic self-identification in the following relations: (3.a) Hungarian-Roma; (3.b) Hungarian-Swabian, and (3.c) Hungarian-Romanian. Logically, the rising number of those not wishing to disclose their ethnicity also belongs here.
- (4) Net migration.

### *Natural growth*

Among the demographic processes natural growth can be best documented, as both the ethnicity (nationality) of newborns and deaths is registered in Romania. These data are (more or less) reliable concerning Hungarians.<sup>10</sup>

*The natural growth rate of the total population of Romania and the ethnic Hungarian population of Transylvania*



Source: INS, own calculations

<sup>10</sup> In the case of newborns, we corrected the data in certain counties. See also Gyurgyik-Kiss 2010; Kiss-Barna 2012.

We have to note that the main factor which led to a higher rate of population decrease compared to the national average was the natural decrease. As for Romania, the number of births had surpassed the number of deaths each year before 1992. In the time period between 1992 and 2001, the natural growth rate was -1.9 per thousand, and -1.3 per thousand between 2002 and 2010, respectively. However, in the case of Hungarians, we cannot talk about a positive natural growth rate from the mid-eighties on.

Between 1992 and 2001, the natural growth rate as an annual average was -5.8 per thousand while between 2002 and 2010, it was -5.1 per thousand. Thus we can say that although the natural growth rate of the Hungarian population moved closer to the national average, the natural decrease of the Hungarian population surpassed the national figures even in the last inter-census period.

*The natural growth of the total population of Romania and the ethnic Hungarian population of Transylvania*

|            | Romania   |           |                |      | Hungarians in Transylvania |         |                |      |
|------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|------|----------------------------|---------|----------------|------|
|            | Births    | Deaths    | Natural growth |      | Births                     | Deaths  | Natural growth |      |
|            |           |           | number         | ‰    |                            |         | number         | ‰    |
| 1992-2002* | 2,432,999 | 2,736,837 | -303,838       | -1.3 | 135,383                    | 226,583 | -89,274        | -5.8 |
| 2002-2011* | 2,071,479 | 2,487,625 | -416,146       | -1.9 | 112,349                    | 179,219 | -66,870        | -5.2 |

Source: INS, \*Value calculated for the inter-census period

We have to underline that in the period between 2002 and 2011, the less favourable natural growth rate was not due to a lower propensity of childbearing by Hungarian women (families) or to the lower life expectancy at birth of ethnic Hungarians. In contrast, these were basically identical to the national average in the last inter-census period. Thus, the only factor causing a higher rate of population decline was the less favourable age structure (of 2002).

*The average value of the total fertility rate between 1992-2001 and 2002-2010 (calculated for 1,000 women of reproductive age)*

|           | Romania | ethnic Hungarians of Transylvania |
|-----------|---------|-----------------------------------|
| 1992-2001 | 1,450   | 1,311                             |
| 2002-2010 | 1,371   | 1,366                             |
| Change    | -5.4%   | - 4.2%                            |

Source: Eurostat, own calculations

*Life expectancy at birth by gender for the total population of Romania and for the ethnic Hungarian population of Transylvania between 1994-2001 and 2002-2009*

|           | Romania | ethnic Hungarians of Transylvania |
|-----------|---------|-----------------------------------|
| 1994-2001 | 69.9    | 69.9                              |
| 2002-2009 | 72.3    | 72.4                              |

Source: Eurostat, own calculations

### Intergenerational assimilation

In the case of a minority group, generational reproduction is not only a matter of fertility rates. It is also an important question, whether or not and to what extent are the parents able (and disposed) to transmit their ethno-cultural skills and identity to their offspring. With regards to the ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania, this problem arises quite acutely in interethnic marriages because most of the children growing up in mixed families shift toward the majority identity, group, and culture. Thus, the principal channel of intergenerational assimilation is interethnic marriage. Consequently, intergenerational assimilation depends on two factors: (1) the number of the interethnic marriages (those who marry inter-ethnically); (2) ethnic socialization within interethnic families.

Concerning interethnic marriages, we can also rely on official statistics. Since we have statistics on marriages by the ethnicity of the spouses in the time period of 1992 and 2007, we can compare the figures for 1992-2001 and 2002-2007 periods.

When examining the data by regions, compared to the 1990s, the proportion of homogeneous marriages declined in each region. The greatest decrease took place in Banat (Bánság), Northern Transylvania, and Central Transylvania. In Szeklerland, the changes are insignificant, while in Southern Transylvania the relative stability is due to Braşov (Brassó) and Alba (Fehér) counties. In Hunedoara (Hunyad) and Sibiu (Szeben) counties, the share of interethnic marriages grew considerably. The (relative) stability of the average figures for Transylvania is due to the fact that of those who get married, has increased the share of those from Szeklerland.

*Ethnic reproduction rate and assimilation loss between  
1992-2002 and 2002-2011*

| Region                       | County  | Homo-<br>geneous<br>marriages |               | Ratio of Hun-<br>garian children<br>in interethnic<br>marriages |                         |                           | ER<br>(Ethnic<br>reproduc-<br>tion) |               | Assimila-<br>tion<br>loss |               |
|------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---------------|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------|
|                              |   | 1992-<br>2001                 | 2002-<br>2007 | Total   | Men<br>(Hun-<br>garian) | Women<br>(Hun-<br>garian) | 1992-<br>2001                       | 2002-<br>2007 | 1992-<br>2002             | 2002-<br>2011 |
| Széklerland<br>(Székelyföld) | Covasna<br>(Kovászna)                         | 95.3                          | 94.0          | 54.3  | 61.4                    | 47.8                      | 100.4                               | 100.6         | 73                        | 93            |
|                              | Harghita<br>(Hargita)                         | 96.7                          | 95.8          | 48.0  | 53.4                    | 43.5                      | 99.9                                | 99.9          | -31                       | -38           |
|                              | <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>96.1</b>                   | <b>95.1</b>   |   |                         |                           | 100.1                               | 100.1         | 42                        | 55            |
| Partium                      | Bihar (Bihar)                                 | 85.7                          | 81.7          | 37.2  | 36.9                    | 20                        | 93.8                                | 92.1          | -880                      | -991          |
|                              | Szatmár (Szatmár)                             | 81.7                          | 80.1          | 42.6  | 46.3                    | 39.4                      | 97.4                                | 97.2          | -335                      | -340          |
|                              | Sălaj (Szilágy)                               | 88.7                          | 85.9          | 32.2  | 36.1                    | 28                        | 95.9                                | 94.9          | -260                      | -238          |
|                              | <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>84.6</b>                   | <b>81.8</b>   |   |                         |                           | 95.6                                | 94.6          | -1474                     | -1569         |
| Central<br>Transylvania      | Cluj (Kolozs)                                 | 77.1                          | 71.3          | 28  | 32.4                    | 23.1                      | 89.8                                | 87.2          | -846                      | -777          |
|                              | Mureş (Maros)                                 | 88                            | 84            | 35.6  | 39.2                    | 32.1                      | 96.6                                | 95.4          | -735                      | -863          |
|                              | <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>84.3</b>                   | <b>80.1</b>   |   |                         |                           | 94.7                                | 93.4          | -1581                     | -1639         |
| Northern<br>Transylvania     | Bistriţa-<br>Năsăud<br>(Beszterce-<br>Naszód) | 63                            | 54.5          | 29.4  | 33.6                    | 23.8                      | 84.2                                | 80.6          | -248                      | -187          |
|                              | Maramureş<br>(Máramaros)                      | 58.3                          | 55.5          | 30.1  | 34.1                    | 25.4                      | 83.1                                | 82.0          | -596                      | -367          |
|                              | <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>59.6</b>                   | <b>55.2</b>   |   |                         |                           | 83.5                                | 81.5          | -845                      | -554          |
| Southern<br>Transylvania     | Alba (Fehér)                                  | 67.5                          | 71.7          | 22.8  | 30.4                    | 14.8                      | 82.2                                | 84.5          | -266                      | -121          |
|                              | Braşov (Brassó)                               | 61.7                          | 60.5          | 24.5  | 28.8                    | 20                        | 80.4                                | 79.8          | -645                      | -580          |
|                              | Hunedoara<br>(Hunyad)                         | 45.1                          | 39.3          | 22.1  | 24.5                    | 19.4                      | 69.2                                | 65.9          | -449                      | -233          |
|                              | Sibiu (Szeben)                                | 39.5                          | 33            | 24.4  | 31.6                    | 17.1                      | 69.0                                | 65.6          | -344                      | -231          |
|                              | <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>55.4</b>                   | <b>53.9</b>   |   |                         |                           | 76.8                                | 76.7          | -1704                     | -1165         |
| Banat (Bánság)               | Arad (Arad)                                   | 59.1                          | 54.8          | 29.1  | 32.6                    | 25.3                      | 82.8                                | 81.0          | -540                      | -406          |
|                              | Caraş-Severin<br>(Krassó-<br>Szörény)         | 23                            | 23            | 23.7  | 30.2                    | 16.5                      | 59.0                                | 59.0          | -148                      | -60           |
|                              | Timiş (Temes)                                 | 36.6                          | 32            | 29.4  | 36.7                    | 20.6                      | 72.9                                | 71.0          | -843                      | -606          |
|                              | <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>47.5</b>                   | <b>42.8</b>   |   |                         |                           | 76.8                                | 75.4          | -1531                     | -1073         |
| <b>Transylvania</b>          |   | <b>82.1</b>                   | <b>81.0</b>   | <b>32.3</b>   | <b>37.5</b>             | <b>26.9</b>               | <b>94.5</b>                         | <b>94.7</b>   | <b>-7093</b>              | <b>-5945</b>  |

\*the ratio of children born to Hungarian women and children registered  
as Hungarian



Concerning ethnic socialization within ethnically mixed families, our point of reference are the census data. In 2002, 32 percent of minors living in mixed families with one Hungarian parent were registered as Hungarians. In case of a balanced situation (were “gains” equate the “losses”) this figure would be 50 percent. Significant regional differences can be observed in this regard as well. While in Szeklerland, socialization within interethnic marriages is well-balanced, exogamy led to the demographic erosion of the Hungarian community in all the other regions.

Since there are no 2011 census data available on the subject, we can only rely on the figures of the 2002 census for calculating the ethnic reproduction rate.<sup>11</sup> The ethnic reproduction rate shows how the number of children registered as Hungarians relates to the number of children born to Hungarian women.<sup>12</sup> From that, we can also infer the magnitude of intergenerational assimilation that reduces the generational replacement of the ethnic minority (in comparison with female fertility).

There are considerable regional differences (related to the proportion of interethnic marriages and ethnic socialization within interethnic marriages). In Szeklerland (where the proportion of interethnic marriages is relatively small and ethnic socialization is balanced within interethnic families), there is no assimilation loss, but in some counties of Southern Transylvania, assimilation may deduct as much as 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the generational replacement of the Hungarian population. The value of ethnic reproduction rate in all of Transylvania (aggregated on the basis of county data) was 94.5 percent between 1992-2002 and 94.7 percent between 2002-2011. In other words, (compared to the number of children born to Hungarian women), we can calculate an assimilation loss of 5.5 percent and 5.3 percent. With the exception of Szeklerland, the ethnic reproduction rate dropped in every region. The fact that the value rose at the level of Transylvania can be explained by the shifting of the regional distri-

<sup>11</sup> The formula is as follows:  $ER = HomM \times 100 + HetM \times (ERHet\_man + ERHet\_woman)$ , where HomM – the ratio of homogeneous marriages in which ethnic reproduction can be assumed to be 100 percent; HetM – is the ratio of interethnic marriages; ERHet\_man, ERHet\_woman – is the ethnic reproduction within interethnic marriages with a Hungarian wife or husband.

<sup>12</sup> See Szilágyi 2002:2004.

bution of newborns. The proportion of newborns falling on Szeklerland continues to grow, which counterbalances the declining ethnic reproduction indicators of the other areas. The intergenerational assimilation loss thus calculated was 7,000 persons between 1992-2002 and 6,000 persons between 2002-2011.

The intergenerational assimilation statistically is not an independent element of the population loss but it is closely related to the rate of natural increase. As we mentioned already the number of deaths exceeded by 66,870 the number of births. This number already includes the assimilation loss, which reduced the number of newborns registered as Hungarian by 6,000 persons.

### **Change of ethnic identification in Hungarian-Swabian relations**

In Satu Mare (Szatmár) county and especially in the rural area surrounding Carei (Nagykároly) there lives a large Hungarian-speaking population of German/Swabian origin. Szatmár Swabians have been affected by a strong process of assimilation since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but they have maintained a sense of ethnic origin. Since one can identify the territory populated by Szatmár Swabians, it is relatively easy to follow the fluctuation of ethnic self-identification from census to census. In the 13 villages concerned, only 1,991 people identified themselves as German and 29,414 as Hungarian in 1966. By 1977, the number of Germans went up to 3,093, and that of Hungarians dropped to 25,906. The number of ethnic Germans (including Swabians) reached its peak in 1992, causing an 8,000 statistical loss for Hungarians. On the other hand, in 2002, (with the German ethnic revival drawing to an end), it was the Hungarians who registered a significant gain of about 7 thousand persons. In 2011, the change of self-identification was much less numerous than in the previous two censuses. In 2002, approximately 80.8 percent of those with a simultaneous German and Hungarian affiliation identified themselves as Hungarian, while in 2011, this figure was 82.6 percent. A change of census identification in favour of the German category can be observed in the villages of Urziceni (Csanálos) and Ciumești (Csomaköz). There was a shift in favour of the Hungarian category in Foieni (Mezőfény) and Ardu

(Erdőd). On the whole, the population change due to changed census identification could involve no more than a few hundred persons (we shall say 200 persons in the following), and it tended to increase, rather than decrease, the (statistical) number of Hungarians.

### **Change of ethnic identification in the Roma-Hungarian relations**

As we have mentioned above, there is no consensus about the number of the Roma at the national level. The core of the problem lies in the fact that the social construction of Roma ethnicity differs greatly from that of the Hungarian or Romanian, and as such, censuses are not necessarily adequate tools to establish the number of the Roma. While being Hungarian or Romanian is a matter of subjective self-identification and based on given linguistic-cultural traits, people become Roma mainly because others consider them to be such.

With respect to the Hungarian-speaking Roma, representative individual municipal (community level) surveys provide some orientation. On the basis of the survey *Turning points of the life course - Transylvania*<sup>13</sup> in 2006, we came to the conclusion that in Transylvania, there may be about 150 thousand Roma who speak Hungarian, out of whom 88 thousand identified themselves as being Hungarian.

Now let us see which ethnic identification the Roma opted for in the censuses. At the national level, the 1966 census was a low point concerning the number of those who identified themselves as Roma. In that year, only 64,197 persons claimed to be Roma. Compared to that, the number of the Gypsies/Roma rose from census to census as a result of two factors: their natural increase (which was caused by a far higher fertility rate than that of non-Roma) and the so called *Roma dissimulation*<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> The survey carried out in 2006 was initiated by the Demographic Research Institute of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. About the results, see *Spéder* (ed.) 2009.

<sup>14</sup> We mean by this that people who had identified themselves as Romanian or Hungarian in the previous censuses now called themselves Gypsies/Roma. Naturally, this interpretation of assimilation/dissimulation is oversimplified, but we shall refer to this phenomenon by these terms for ease of understanding.

*Number of persons who identified themselves as Gypsy/Roma (according to the 1966, 1977, 1992, 2002, and 2011 censuses) and the gains of the Gypsy/Roma category in self-identification*

|      |  | Romania        | Transylvania   | Bihar (Bihar) | Covasna (Kovácsna) | Harghita (Hargita) | Mureş (Maros) | Satu Mare (Szatmár) | Sălaj (Szilágy) |
|------|--|----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1966 | <b>Number of Gypsies according to census</b>                                       | <b>64,197</b>  | <b>49,105</b>  | <b>3,678</b>  | <b>1,465</b>       | <b>1,390</b>       | <b>11,402</b> | <b>1,750</b>        | <b>1,779</b>    |
| 1977 | <b>Number of Gypsies according to census</b>                                       | <b>227,398</b> | <b>123,028</b> | <b>12,014</b> | <b>3,522</b>       | <b>3,228</b>       | <b>20,019</b> | <b>5,256</b>        | <b>3,920</b>    |
|      | Population number calculated from 1966 census results with a yearly growth of 2%   | 79,821         | 61,056         | 4,573         | 1,822              | 1,728              | 14,177        | 2,176               | 2,212           |
|      | Gains by change of census identity   | 147,557        | 61,972         | 7,441         | 1,700              | 1,500              | 5,842         | 3,080               | 1,708           |
|      | Hungarian-Roma ethnicity transfer  | 10,160         | 10,160         | 3,792         | 800                | 1,500              | 1,500         | 2,418               | 150             |
| 1992 | <b>Number of Gypsies according to census</b>                                       | <b>401,097</b> | <b>202,665</b> | <b>21,796</b> | <b>2,641</b>       | <b>3,827</b>       | <b>34,798</b> | <b>9,823</b>        | <b>9,224</b>    |
|      | Population number calculated from 1977 census results with a yearly growth of 2%   | 306,048        | 165,579        | 16,169        | 4,740              | 4,344              | 26,943        | 7,074               | 5,276           |
|      | Gains by change of census identity   | 95,049         | 37,086         | 5,627         | -2,099             | -510               | 7,855         | 2,749               | 3,948           |
|      | Hungarian-Roma ethnicity transfer  | 3,489          | 3,489          | -316          | -1,000             | -435               | 3,000         | 1,406               | 834             |
| 2002 | <b>Number of Roma according to census</b>  | <b>535,140</b> | <b>244,475</b> | <b>30,089</b> | <b>5,973</b>       | <b>3,835</b>       | <b>40,425</b> | <b>13,478</b>       | <b>12,544</b>   |
|      | Population number calculated from 1992 census results with a yearly growth of 1.6% | 470,096        | 237,529        | 25,545        | 3,095              | 4,485              | 40,784        | 11,513              | 10,811          |
|      | Gains by changes of census identity  | 65,044         | 6,946          | 4,544         | 2,878              | -650               | -359          | 1,965               | 1,733           |
|      | Hungarian-Roma ethnicity transfer  | -1,194         | -1,194         | 868           | -400               | -1,125             | -1,234        | 822                 | -125            |
| 2011 | <b>Number of Roma according to census</b>  | <b>619,007</b> | <b>271,417</b> | <b>33,694</b> | <b>8,238</b>       | <b>5,422</b>       | <b>46,637</b> | <b>17,513</b>       | <b>15,137</b>   |
|      | Population number calculated from 2002 census results with a yearly growth of 1.6% | 627,198        | 286,531        | 35,265        | 7,001              | 4,495              | 47,379        | 15,797              | 14,702          |
|      | Gains by changes of census identity  | -8,191         | -15,114        | -1,571        | 1,237              | 927                | -742          | 1,716               | 435             |
|      | Hungarian-Roma ethnicity transfer  | 2,514          | 2,514          | -2,057        | 456                | 767                | 1,647         | 1,080               | 221             |

Source: INS, own calculations

In the above table, we tried to separate these two factors. We calculated with a Roma population growth of 2 percent for 1966-1992 and 1.6 percent for 1992-2011. According to this, the Roma dissimilation gain was 145 thousand in 1977, 95 thousand in 1992, and 65 thousand in 2002 at the national level. In 2011, 619 thousand people identified themselves as Roma in Romania. This figure is clearly lower than what could be expected according to the hypothesis of the 1.6 percent yearly increase of the Roma population, which numbered 535 thousand in 2002. This demonstrates that as opposed to the previous three censuses (1977, 1992, and 2002), we cannot talk about Roma dissimilation at the national level. In fact, there were 8 thousand fewer people identified themselves as Roma than in the previous census. In Transylvania, the connection is even more obvious. Here the Roma population dropped due to census identification change by 15 thousand. That is all the more surprising since the 2011 census was the first one during which Roma organizations led a serious identity campaign (to increase their own numbers).<sup>15</sup>

In Hungarian-Roma relations, the census identification trends did not follow the national trends. In 1977 and 1992, in harmony with the national trend, a greater proportion of the Hungarian Gypsies identified themselves as Gypsy. However, the tide turned in 2002, and compared to 1992, more Hungarian speaking Roma claimed to be affiliated with the Hungarian community. In 2011, the situation was reversed. While in 2002, the changes of census identification had a positive outcome (from a Hungarian perspective) in spite of the Roma dissimilation at the national level, in 2011, the balance turned negative despite the fact that at the national level we cannot talk about Roma dissimilation. This was manifest in all the counties with the exception of Bihor (Bihar). The aggregated figures often conceal a multi-directional movement. On the whole, we estimated the Hungarian population loss to Roma dissimilation at 2,514 persons. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the majority of Hungarian Roma (especially the ones living in Szeklerland) continued to identify themselves as Hungarian. In Szeklerland (including Târgu Mureş /Marosvásárhely and its surrounding area),

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.romanicroiss.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=336-&Itemid=64](http://www.romanicroiss.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=336-&Itemid=64)

there are about 71 thousand Roma<sup>16</sup> according to our estimates, of whom 56 percent claimed to be Hungarian in 2011.

### **Migration trends and changes of ethnic identification in Romanian-Hungarian relations**

Before 1989 ethnic minorities were highly overrepresented among the migrants from Romania. The out-migration of Hungarians intensified from the second half of the 1980s. Between 1987-1991, nearly 100 thousand Hungarians left Transylvania. In the 1990s, Hungarians continued to be heavily overrepresented within the migrant population. If we take into consideration the data on natural growth, the total population loss caused by net migration could be estimated as 825,233 between 1992-2002, which corresponds to an average of -3.6 per thousand annual net migration. Regarding Hungarians, based on calculations on natural growth and change of census identification, we can calculate with a migration loss of -110 thousand or an average annual net migration rate of -6.6 per thousand. That also means that in 1992, roughly 13 percent of the migration loss affected the Hungarian population making up 7.2 percent of the total population.

After the millenium, however, Romanian migration was profoundly transformed as a result of the country's extremely intensive participation in the international migration movements. After the year 2000, Romania became the second most significant sending country in Eastern Europe after Poland. The census results seem to confirm the assumptions according to which 2-2.5 million Romanian citizens reside abroad, mainly in Western Europe. Based on the data on natural increase, the 2011 census highlighted a population loss caused by migration of 2.22 million, which means a -11.4 per thousand of annual average net migration, or a loss of -10.3 percent of the 2002 population. Out-migration has the greatest impact on the Moldovan region and Southern Transylvania, while the least affected are the areas inhabited by the highest proportion of Hungarians: Szeklerland (Székelyföld), Partium, Central Transylvania, and also

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<sup>16</sup> Not all of them are Hungarian speaking. For a detailed analysis see *Kiss-Barna* (2012).

*Population changes due to factors other than natural growth in the total and the Hungarian population between 2002-2011*

| Region                    | County                             | Net migration of the total population               |                     | Hungarians                       |                     |               |                     |        |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|--------|
|                           |                                    | Total population change (other than natural growth) |                     | Changes of census identification |                     | Net migration |                     |        |
|                           |                                    | Number  | %o (yearly average) | Number                           | %o (yearly average) | number        | %o (yearly average) |        |
| Szeklerland (Székelyföld) | Covasna (Kovácszna)                | -16,261   | -7.9                | -10,073                          | -6.6                | -636          | -9,437              | -6.2   |
|                           | Harghita (Hargita)                 | -19,969   | -6.6                | -15,174                          | -5.9                | -899          | -14,275             | -5.5   |
|                           | Total                              | -36,229   | -7.1                | -25,247                          | -6.1                | -1,535        | -23,712             | -5.8   |
|                           | Partium                            | Bihar (Bihar)                                       | -37,106             | -6.7                             | -7,704              | -5.4          | 1,147               | -8,851 |
| Sălaj (Szilágy)           |                                    | -23,422   | -10.5               | -3,727                           | -7.2                | -369          | -3,358              | -6.4   |
| Satu Mare (Szatmár)       |                                    | -30,326   | -9.1                | -9,779                           | -8.3                | -1,292        | -8,487              | -7.2   |
| Total                     |                                    | -53,747   | -8.2                | -21,210                          | -6.8                | -514          | -20,696             | -6.6   |
| Central Transylvania      | Cluj (Kolozs)                      | -26,850   | -4.1                | -9,488                           | -8.7                | -1,082        | -8,406              | -7.7   |
|                           | Mureş (Maros)                      | -41,877   | -7.8                | -15,596                          | -7.5                | -2,792        | -12,804             | -6.2   |
|                           | Total                              | -122,474  | -5.8                | -25,084                          | -7.9                | -3,874        | -21,210             | -6.7   |
| Northern Transylvania     | Bistrița-Năsăud (Beszterce-Naszód) | -35,459   | -12.5               | -2,100                           | -13.1               | -20.0         | -2,080              | -13.1  |
|                           | Maramureş (Máramaros)              | -46,551   | -10.0               | -8,254                           | -21.1               | -1,213*       | -7,041              | -18.0  |
|                           | Total                              | -82,009   | -10.9               | -10,354                          | -18.8               | -1,233        | -9,121              | -16.6  |
| Southern Transylvania     | Alba (Fehér)                       | -45,003   | -13.2               | -3,094                           | -17.5               | -15           | -3,079              | -17.5  |
|                           | Braşov (Brassó)                    | -85,785   | -16.3               | -8,023                           | -18.4               | -105          | -7,918              | -18.4  |
|                           | Hunedoara (Hunyad)                 | -71,567   | -16.9               | -7,714                           | -38.4               | -1,603*       | -6,110              | -30.4  |
|                           | Sibiu (Szeben)                     | -46,064   | -12.0               | -3,171                           | -25.0               | -431*         | -2,739              | -21.6  |
| Banat (Bánság)            | Total                              | -248,420  | -14.8               | -22,002                          | -23.4               | -2,154*       | -19,847             | -21.2  |
|                           | Arad (Arad)                        | -33,425   | -8.0                | -7,376                           | -17.7               | -400          | -6,976              | -17.7  |
|                           | Caras-Severin (Krassó-Szörény)     | -45,927   | -15.7               | -2,243                           | -51.0               | -1,000*       | -1,242              | -28.3  |
| Transylvania Romania      | Timiş (Temes)                      | -16,661   | -2.6                | -11,406                          | -27.5               | -5,433*       | -5,972              | -14.4  |
|                           | Total                              | -96,013   | -7.1                | -21,025                          | -24                 | -6,833*       | -14,190             | -16.7  |
|                           |                                    | -638,893  | -9.8                | -124,923                         | -9.8                | -16,143*      | -108,777            | -8.6   |
|                           |                                    | -2,221,892  | -11.3               | -127,455                         | -9.9                | -16,143       | -111,312            | -8.5   |

The figures marked with an \* asterisk are based on the intuitive estimation of census identification changes in Hungarian-Romanian relations (not supported by specific data).

Banat (Bánság) where Hungarians represent a lower proportion of the population.

In the case of Hungarians, we separated – mostly intuitively<sup>17</sup> – the net migration from the changes caused by transfer of census identification in Romanian-Hungarian relations. In our former analyses, we assumed that intra-generational assimilation (i.e. that someone who had identified himself as Hungarian would change to Romanian self-identification) is not typical (or is statistically insignificant) in Transylvania. However, on the basis of the data from 2011, it seems that we cannot put down the decrease of the Hungarian population solely to migration trends, especially in Caraş-Severin (Krassó-Szörény), Hunedoara (Hunyad), Sibiu (Szeben), and Maramureş (Máramaros) counties.

The table shows population movement due to factors other than natural growth, first with respect to the overall, then to the Hungarian population. Regarding the total population, it corresponds to the (external and internal) net migration. As we have mentioned above, at the national level, the loss caused by migration was 2.22 million, while in Transylvania, it is 638 thousand. This means an annual average net migration of -11.3 per thousand and -9.8 per thousand, respectively.

As for the Hungarian population, we have split the data into two components: the change of census identification and net migration. On the one hand, the column of census identification change contains the results of the documented trends (Roma-Hungarian, Swabian-Hungarian and non-respondents), and on the other, it also offers estimates for the possible volume of identification change in Romanian-Hungarian relations in a selection of counties. We assumed that ethnicity transfer from Hungarian to Romanian had taken place where the population loss of Hungarians due to factors other than natural increase surpassed the value for the total population by more than 1.8. These counties were Caraş-Severin (Krassó-Szörény), Hunedoara (Hunyad), Timiş (Temes), Maramureş (Máramaros), and Sibiu (Szeben). In their case, we calculated with the net migration rate presented in the last two columns of the table. With respect to Hunedoara (Hunyad), Maramureş (Máramaros), and Sibiu (Szeben),

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<sup>17</sup> More in detail in *Kiss-Barna* 2012: 62-64.



the figure is 1.8 times higher than the migration loss for the total population, while in Timiș (Temes) county, it is 1.8 times higher than the migration loss minus the internal migration gain. Accordingly, the changes caused by identification transfer is -16,143, whereas the net migration is -111,312.

## Conclusions

In summary of the above, demographic trends of the Hungarian population were affected by different factors.

### *Factors determining population size*

|   | number          | %    |
|---|-----------------|------|
| Net migration   | -111,312        | 57.4 |
| Natural increase  | -60,661         | 31.3 |
| Intergenerational assimilation  | -5,945          | 3.1  |
| Changes of census identification (Romanian–Hungarian relations)                   | -9,158          | 4.7  |
| Non-response  | -4,671          | 2.4  |
| Changes of census identification (Roma– Hungarian and German-Hungarian relations) | -2,314          | 1.2  |
| The demographic evolution of the population between 2002-2011                     | <b>-194,061</b> |      |

Between 2002-2011, Hungarian population decrease was mostly the result of migration loss. Compared to the previous period (1992-2002), the out-migration of Hungarians reached greater proportions (annually 8.5 per thousand compared to annually 6.6 per thousand) despite the fact that it still remained far below the figure pertaining to the majority Romanian population as well as that of the total population of the country. In our previous demographic projections concerning the Hungarian population, we had underestimated the migration affecting the Hungarian community, since compared to the period between 1992-2002, we had projected a slightly decreasing migration loss (Csata–Kiss 2007). The migration loss grew especially in the diaspora region where migration was typically directed toward Western Europe. As opposed to the previous inter-census period, the number of migrants moving to Hungary did not decline significantly: 60-75 percent of the 111 thousand migration loss is made up of migrants to Hungary (65-83 thousand persons).

The natural decrease of the Hungarian population was more accentuated than that of the total population. That was true despite the fact that Hungarian fertility and life expectancy at birth were not lower than the national average. In the period examined, the number of deaths exceeded that of births by 66 thousand. This figure also includes the 6-thousand intergenerational assimilation loss, which is due to the fact that the majority of children born in interethnic marriages are not registered by their parents as Hungarian.

The next factor is the change of census identification changes that turned out to be less favourable in 2011 than in 2002. First of all, the non-response rate grew regarding ethnicity, and about 4,600 non-respondents had possibly identified themselves as Hungarian before. Second, we incurred a population loss in Roma–Hungarian relations as well, even though this was the first census since 1966 without Roma dissimilation at the national level. Contrary to our previous studies, this time we assumed that about 10 thousand was the balance of changes of identification in Romanian–Hungarian relations as well.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the regional differences once again, which appear in each and every demographic trend between the ethnic blocs and the dispersed population regions. In Szeklerland (and to a smaller extent, in Partium), thanks to the more favourable age structure, the natural growth rate is also more favourable than in areas of dispersed settlements. Moreover, the Hungarian communities living there did not join the migration flow to Western Europe or if they did, only to a lesser degree. Consequently, the population loss of the Hungarians of Partium and Szeklerland was significantly less whom compared to the national figure. The disappearance of the dispersed settlements is happening faster than expected and also implies that within the Hungarian community of Transylvania, ethnic blocs – especially Szeklerland (Székelyföld) – will have an increasingly important maintenance role in the future.

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*Translated by Judit Pethő-Szirmai*



*László Gyurgyík*

## **The demographic trends of the ethnic Hungarian population of Slovakia in light of the 2011 census to the present**

### **Antecedents**

In February 2012, the Slovak Statistical Bureau published the first results of the 2011 census. The publication had been delayed by several months, and the underlying reasons of the problem were regularly discussed by the Slovakian daily press. In fact, the Slovak Statistical Bureau also looked into the difficulties of inquiring, the expected date of the publication of the first results, and the reasons for the delay. According to the figures published, the population of Slovakia numbered 5,397,036 persons, which constitutes a surplus of 17,581 persons in comparison with the data of the previous census of 2001. In the history of the (Czecho)slovakian censuses, there had never been such a small increase in population except for the 1940s including the period of World War II. The Hungarian population consisted of 458,467 persons; that is, it decreased by 62,061 persons. Before attempting to analyse the reasons for this decline, let us briefly review the demographic evolution of the ethnic Hungarian population of Slovakia from the foundation of the Republic of Czechoslovakia to the present.

**Table 1.**

*The number and the proportion of Hungarian and Slovak population in Slovakia, 1921-2011*

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>From which Slovaks</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>From which Hungarians</b> | <b>%</b> |
|-------------|--------------|---------------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|
| 1921        | 3,000,870    | 1,952,368                 | 65.1     | 650,597                      | 21.7     |
| 1930        | 3,329,793    | 2,251,358                 | 67.6     | 592,337                      | 17.8     |
| 1950        | 3,442,317    | 2,982,524                 | 86.6     | 354,532                      | 10.3     |
| 1961        | 4,174,046    | 3,560,216                 | 85.3     | 518,782                      | 12.4     |
| 1970        | 4,537,290    | 3,878,904                 | 85.5     | 552,006                      | 12.2     |
| 1980        | 4,991,168    | 4,317,008                 | 86.5     | 559,490                      | 11.2     |
| 1991        | 5,274,335    | 4,519,328                 | 85.7     | 567,296                      | 10.8     |
| 2001        | 5,379,455    | 4,614,854                 | 85.8     | 520,528                      | 9.7      |
| 2011        | 5,397,036    | 4,352,775                 | 80.7     | 458,467                      | 8.5      |

Between 1921 and 2011, the Hungarian population of Slovakia went down from 650,597 to 458,467, that is, there was a decrease of 192,130 persons or a decrease of 29.5 percent. In the same period, the population of Slovakia grew from 3,000,870 to 5,397,036, showing an increase of 2,396,166 or 79.9 percent. The demographic evolution of the Hungarian population between 1921-2011 has been very uneven.

From a demographic perspective, the changes in the headcount of the Hungarian population can be divided into three periods.

1.) Between 1921-1950, the number of Hungarians dropped. The decrease following World War I could be put down to the fact that part of the Hungarian middle class left the country, mostly for Hungary, and also that those having multiple ethnic bonds changed their ethnicity, if only statistically. What is more, part of the Jewish population was „statistically separated” from the Hungarians. During World War II and in subsequent years, trends pointed in opposite directions: in the territories re-annexed to Hungary, people with multi-ethnic bonds identified themselves, once again, as Hungarian. At the same time, the Jews deported to death camps made the Hungarian population shrink. The number of ethnic Hungarians fell most sharply in the second half of the 1940s as a result of expatriation, population exchange, reslovakization, and deportation. It is no accident that in the 1950 census, the Hungarian population numbered 237,805 fewer persons than in 1930.

2.) From 1950 to 1991, the growth rate of the Hungarian population declined with every decade. The peak growth of the 1950s can be partially explained by the high natural increase, but more importantly, to the Hungarian self-identification of the Hungarians who were formerly reslovakized. In the 1960s, the significant natural increase was also complemented by the „statistical return” to the Hungarian population of some of those re-embracing their Hungarian identity. In the 1970s and 1980s, the natural increase – now diminishing, but still notable – was greatly reduced by assimilation and ethnicity swapping tendencies. At the same time, in the period between the political changeover and the 1991 census, some of those who had earlier called themselves Slovak – mixed both with regard to their residence and age – now identified themselves as Hungarians.

3.) The third phase of the demographic evolution of ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia started in the 1990s, and it has been marked by a considerable shrinkage of the Hungarian population.

Between 1991-2001, the number of Hungarians dropped by 47 thousand while from 2001 to 2011, it decreased by a further 62 thousand. Moreover, in the latest two censuses, we had to face a problem regarding the number of ethnicities – a problem that had barely existed before. Whereas in the 1980 census and before, the proportion of people with unknown ethnicity (i.e. those refusing to state their ethnic affiliations) had been statistically negligible, this figure was 8,782 in 1991, 54,502 in 2001 (i.e. 1 percent of the total population), and 382,493 in 2011 (7 percent of the total population), respectively.

The Czechoslovakian censuses inquired not only about ethnicity, but occasionally, about mother tongue as well.<sup>1</sup> There is a particular relationship between the ethnicity and mother tongue data of certain ethnic groups: the proportion of the members of the majority nation is higher on the basis of ethnicity data, while the number of minority ethnicities is higher with respect to their affiliation by their mother tongue. (In other words, ethnic affiliation is considered to be a kind of „official data”, especially since this question appears on various official forms, but the category of mother tongue is attributed no such role.) The proportion and the divergence of the two figures indicate the consistency of belonging to a given ethnic community. The smaller the difference between these two indicators, the stronger we consider the ethnic affiliation of the members of each ethnicity. In 2011, the ethnic Hungarian population numbered 508,714 persons according to their mother tongue; that is, their number was 11.0 percent higher than according to their ethnic affiliation. (7.5 percent of the inhabitants did not state their affiliation by their mother tongue.)<sup>2</sup>

In the following, we shall look at the factors determining the reduction of the Hungarian population: decrease replacing natural increase, Hungarian-Slovak assimilation trends and (hidden) migration.<sup>3</sup> These factors cannot always be distinguished on the level of the available statistical data. Concerning hidden migration, we can only propose some estimates.

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<sup>1</sup> In the years of 1970, 1991, 2001, and 2011, the census also inquired about the mother tongue of the respondents.

<sup>2</sup> In former censuses, the number of Hungarians was 7.2-10.1 percent greater according to mother tongue than according to ethnicity. The smallest deviation was observed in 1991.

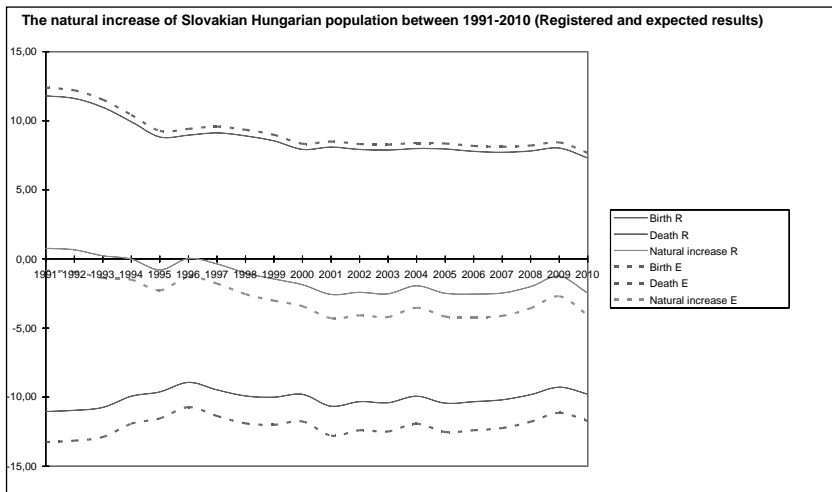
<sup>3</sup> See *Gyurgytk* (2006)

### 1.) Natural increase (decrease)

First of all, let us examine the trends of natural increase and decrease of the Hungarian population. We can rely on the birth and death registers of the Hungarian population for the period 1991-2010.

The migration trends are quite different in the 1990s and in the post-millennium decade. Between 1991-2000, 54,923 ethnic Hungarian births were registered while from 2001 to 2010, their number dropped to 40,527. In other words, in the first decade after the millenium, the number of those registered as ethnic Hungarians was 26.6 percent lower than in the previous decade. The differences in the number of deaths are significantly smaller between the two decades examined. In the 1990s, there were 57,068 deaths of ethnic Hungarians registered, whereas between 2001-2010, this figure was 52,210. In both decades, the number of deaths exceeded that of births, thus on the basis of the registered data, the Hungarian population diminished by more than 2,000 persons due to natural decrease in the 1990s and by nearly 12,000 persons in the decade after the millenium.

**Chart 1.**



A more thorough and complex survey conducted by us earlier on the basis of district-level migration data revealed the inconsistency of the registered migration data of ethnic Hungarians in several ways.



There were significant divergences between the data regarding the total population and ethnic Hungarian population of the districts.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to our *a priori* expectations, there were major differences in the turnout of the number of deaths. As a result, we calculated the so-called estimated crude birth rate and estimated crude death rate of Hungarians by taking into consideration the age distribution of the Hungarian population. Table 1 presents the demographic evolution of the natural migration of the Hungarian population between 1991-2010 on the basis of the registered data and the so-called estimates.

The expected birth rate and death rate exceed their registered number. The difference is extremely significant, especially in the case of deaths. While the estimated crude birth rate is 1.5 percent higher than their registered number, the estimated crude death rate is 19 percent higher than the registered figure.

It can be demonstrated that in both decades, the rate of natural decrease according to the estimates was greater by about 10,000 persons than on the basis of the registered data. It follows from that that we need to revise our assumptions retrospectively, concerning the demographic evolution of the Hungarian population in the 1980s and 1990s.

Based on the registered data, the Hungarian population produced a natural increase of 437 persons in 1991, but according to the estimates, the number of Hungarians dropped by 463 persons. In 2001, the registered data revealed a natural decrease of 1,333 persons while the estimates indicated a natural decrease of 2,149 persons. In the light of all that, we have to modify our previous assumption that the natural decrease of the Hungarian population started in the mid-90s. The reduction must have begun as early as the late 1980s. Between 1991-2001, the rate of natural decrease, based on the registered data, was more than 2,000 persons.

The actual decrease, that is, the difference of births, deaths and migration, was slightly lower than that, since in the period in question, the migration balance of the Hungarian population showed an approximate surplus of 600 persons.<sup>5</sup> Compared to the national

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<sup>4</sup> See: *László Gyurgyík-Tamás Kiss* (2010)

<sup>5</sup> According to the registered data, the actual decrease of the ethnic Hungarians was 1,520 persons between 1991-2000.

trends, the growth of the Hungarian population remains 15-20 percent below the national average. One of the reasons for this is the fertility rate of Hungarians, which is lower than the national average. The other explanation is that the overwhelming majority of the children born from interethnic marriages identify themselves as Slovak and belonging to the ethnic majority. But we shall come back to this issue when examining assimilation trends.

## **2.) Assimilation – ethnicity swapping**

In the following, we will look at the extent to which assimilation trends have affected the demographic evolution of ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia. We will analyse Hungarian-Slovak assimilation trends from two aspects. Besides intergenerational assimilation, we will examine intragenerational trends as well.

Intergenerational assimilation trends can be mainly observed in the evolution of the ethnic affiliation of children born from interethnic marriages. According to two surveys carried out in 1998 and in 2000, children born from Hungarian-Slovak interethnic marriages do not identify themselves as Hungarian and as Slovak in the same proportion.<sup>6</sup> If a nearly equal number of children coming from such families considered themselves as Hungarian or Slovak, ethnicity swap and assimilation would not be significant among them. According to the data of the above mentioned surveys, 80 percent of the children born from interethnic marriages call themselves Slovak, and only 20 percent of them identify themselves later on as ethnic Hungarian. Considering that about 30 percent of Hungarian marriages are interethnic (and more than 90 percent of those are made with a Slovak partner), Hungarian ethnic fertility is significantly lower than Hungarian biological fertility.<sup>7</sup>

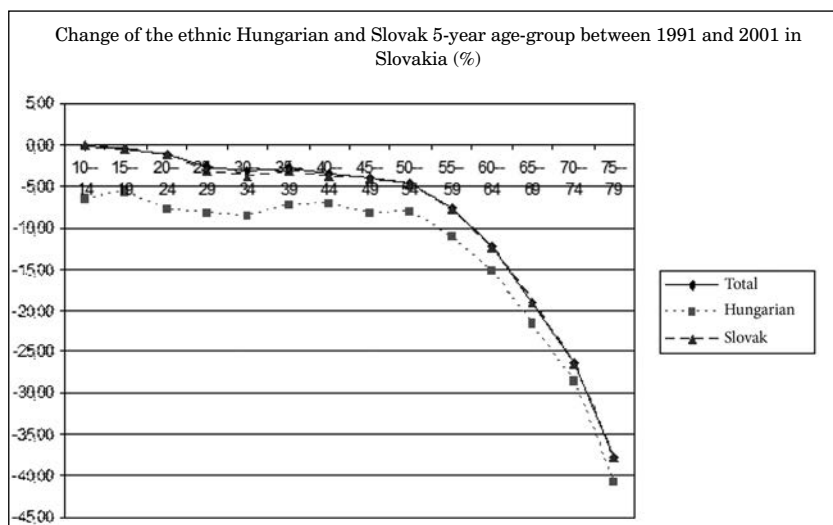
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<sup>6</sup> See: *Csepeli-Örkény-Székelyi* (2002), *Gyurgyík* (2006)

<sup>7</sup> When examining ethnic fertility, we have to distinguish between demographic and ethnic reproduction. By the demographic reproduction of Hungarians, we mean the total number of children born to mothers of Hungarian ethnicity, while ethnic reproduction indicates the number of children of Hungarian ethnicity. The first figure is higher because not every child born to a Hungarian mother will eventually identify himself as Hungarian. With regards to the evolution of reproduction, we

Now let us examine how assimilation trends manifest themselves intragenerationally, in the lifetime of generations. This can be assessed on the basis of the census data with the help of the so-called age-adjusted method. We focus on the rate of Hungarian population loss assigned to each five-year age category decade by decade. Next we weight the 2001 data according to age brackets by the value of these changes.

**Chart 2.**



The logic of our analysis rests on the assumption that several factors can influence the number of those belonging to certain five-year age brackets in the interval between two censuses. One of the most important factors is the number of deaths, which grows towards the older age brackets, while the other factor can be explained by international migration.

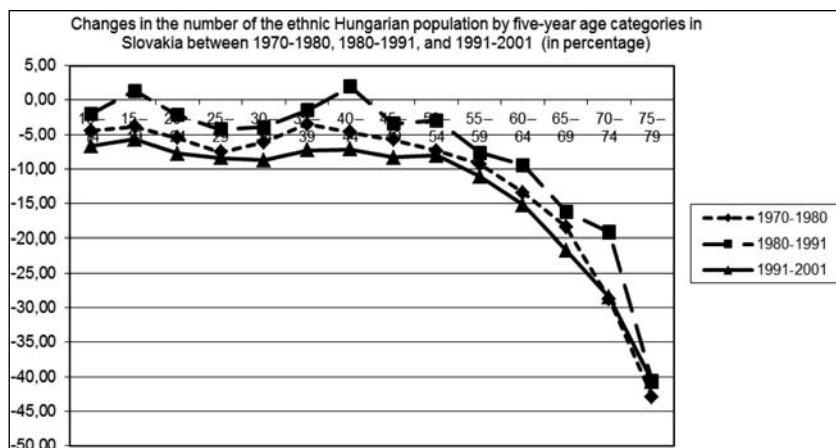
It can be observed in the national data between the two censuses that there is a slight increase in the diminution of the five-year age brackets (for the most part, in relation to the age-specific death indi-

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have to distinguish between biological and ethnic reproduction. Biological reproduction refers to children born to Hungarian mothers, whereas ethnic reproduction is the proportion of Hungarian births to the number of children born to Hungarian women. (Szilágyi 2002:71).

cators) as we proceed towards the older age categories. This increase gradually accelerates from the age brackets of 50-54-year-olds. This natural trend manifests itself somewhat differently with regards to the total population of Slovakia and the Hungarian and Slovak ethnicities. The diminution of the Slovak population by age categories is nearly identical to that of the total population. The decrease of those belonging to the five-year age brackets of the Hungarian population follows the overall national trends, but the decline of the age brackets of 10-14-year-olds and 30-34-year-olds is about 5-7% higher than the national figures. Towards the elderly age brackets, the difference becomes smaller, but the decrease of the Hungarian population continues to exceed the national figure. It is noteworthy that the decrease of the Hungarian population by five-year age brackets is at least twice as great from the age category of 10-14-year-olds till that of 40-45-year-olds than in the total population. The biggest difference between the diminution of the age brackets of the total population and the Hungarian population presents itself in the case of children and those under-18. For the most part, this marked difference is not the result of potential inaccuracy and distortion of the data, but it is a consequence of ethnicity swapping and assimilation trends.

**Chart 3.**



Similarly, if we analyse the data of the previous two decades, the 1970s and the 1980s, we can see that the diminution by age cate-

gory of the Hungarian population peaked in the 1990s. The loss was similarly structured, but less significant in the 1970s. In the 1980s, however, the decline was much less considerable; the population of certain age brackets even increased over those 10 years, so there was a (temporary) dissimilation for the benefit of the Hungarian population in these age categories.<sup>8</sup>

This positive change took place in spite of the fact that the inclusion of the Roma ethnicity in the census form had an erosive effect on the Hungarian population. In the graph presenting the data of the three decades, the youngest age brackets include the 10-14-year-olds (in 2001).

The data of those persons who were born between the two censuses are not shown by the graph because they were enumerated for the first time in the latest census.

In the 2001 census, the volume of the Hungarian 0-4-year-old population was 10.3 percent lower and that of the 5-9-year-olds was 15.6 percent lower than the number of births based on the registry of births, deaths, and marriages. The number of 0-9-year-olds went down by 2.3 percent within the total population of Slovakia.<sup>9</sup> Based on the analysis of the five-year age-specific data, there is a difference of approximately 26 thousand persons between Slovak population loss and ethnic Hungarian population loss (between the censuses of 1991 and 2001.) (In other words, as the magnitude of the shrinkage of the Hungarian population was greater than that of the total population, this divergence [from the national loss rate] resulted in the „statistical loss” of 26 thousand Hungarians.) This figure gives an approximate idea of the Hungarian population loss due to ethnicity swapping in the given period. However, the actual loss differs from that as a result of various, hardly identifiable distortion factors.

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<sup>8</sup> We can take a different approach to this dissimilation as well. In the 1980s, in certain East-Slovakian districts, the 1991 census data were higher than the projected data of the Hungarian population (till 1990).

<sup>9</sup> In Slovakia, infant mortality rate (under the age of 1) was 0.63 percent in 2001. The mortality rate of the age category of 2-9-year-olds was a fraction of that figure.

### 3.) „Hidden” migration

Demographic statistics can reveal only a fraction of the migration events. The migration data of demographic statistics are unable to keep track of those people whose emigration is not registered by any administrative action.

Usually, there is a long procedure between the two end points of migrating abroad: between „presence” in one’s home country and „absence” from it. It is only in the advanced terminal phase of out-migration (and even then, not every case of it) that such kind of migration can be tracked down by administrative measures. The number of those in the various transitory stages of „presence” and „absence” is quite often many times bigger than that of those who are officially registered as immigrants or emigrants. According to migration statistics, between 1991-2000, the average number of those migrating to Slovakia per year was 1,485 higher than that of those leaving the country, while in reality tens of thousands of people are supposed to have been living abroad for shorter or longer periods of time. On the other hand, there were fewer people who settled down in other countries, but did not (yet) give up their Slovak citizenship (that is, they did not apply for or were not granted foreign citizenship). These cases are not registered by the statistical registers of either Slovakia or other countries. Thus, with regards to people in the transitory stages, we do not have tangible data from national sources.

After the country’s EU accession, the number of those working and studying abroad saw a sharp increase. In the years before the economic crisis (in 2007), 177 thousand Slovak citizens worked abroad.<sup>10</sup>

What we have at hand is a case of hidden migration. The question is what the estimated number of those Hungarians might be who have lived in a foreign country for a longer period of time and who are most likely to return only as visitors (perhaps, they have already settled down, or are in the process of doing so in another country), but who are, officially, still Slovak citizens. Since the census is carried out with the use of the self-enumeration method, a smaller fraction of the absentees are „left out” from the census. The majority of those

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<sup>10</sup> *Jurčová* (2008):35

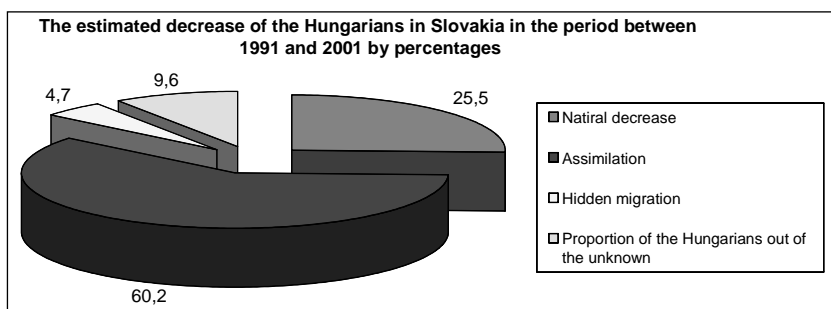
who have been absent for a long time belong to the younger generations, so chances are high that they do not own a flat, and as such, they are registered at the homes of their parents and relatives. In this case, it is quite probable that their relatives will fill in their census forms for them. There is a much greater chance that the census does not reach those who have their own flat or car.

We can assume that in the 1990s, „hidden migration” diminished the number of ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia only mildly, by approximately 2,000 people. However, in the 2011 census, the number of those who did not fill in their census form due to being absent from the country may have been several times greater than previously.

#### 4.) The reasons for the Hungarian population loss in the 1990s and after the millenium

Regarding the 1990s, we can provide a tentative explanation for the reasons of the Hungarian population loss of 47 thousand people on the basis of the factors discussed above.

**Chart 4.**



In that time period, the bulk (about 60 percent) of the Hungarian population loss can be explained by assimilation trends. To a lesser extent, the unfavourable demographic trends and a more ambivalent attitude towards the census were also responsible for the decrease. Nearly 26 percent of the population loss was the result of the approximately 35 percent drop of the birth rate in the 1990s and the Hungarian mortality rate exceeding the national average. Almost 10

percent of the decline can be explained by non-response and nearly 5 percent by hidden migration.

When examining the demographic data of the post-millennium decade, or the interval between the two censuses, we find ourselves in a strikingly different situation than in the analysis of the changes of the previous decade. The interpretation of the magnitude and distribution of non-response constitutes the most significant divergence and challenge.

### 5.) Who are you, the unknown?

It is characteristic of the 2011 census that for certain questions, the proportion of non-response (i.e. the number of those refusing to answer a question) is very high in comparison with the census data of the previous decades. Besides the questions inquiring about ethnic affiliation and the high rate of those not disclosing their ethnic affiliation (the unknown) stood out for other questions as well.<sup>11</sup> The proportion of non-response was also extraordinary for the questions regarding denominational affiliation (10.6%), citizenship (7.3%), mother tongue (7.5%), the language most frequently used in public interaction (9.5%), and the language most frequently used at home (13.5%).

The high number and proportion of non-response can be put down to several factors. First of all, we have to mention the methodological specificities of the Slovak censuses. According to the former Czech(slovakian) practice, the bulk of the population fills in the census form by self-enumeration in the Slovak censuses. In other words, the enumerators' task consists of delivering the census forms to the households and collecting them later on. They can help with filling in the forms if requested. However, their task does not involve

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<sup>11</sup> According to the published data of the 2011 census, the number and proportion of non-respondents was the following: age distribution (1,320 persons) 0.02%; marital status (101,712 persons) 1.9%; citizenship (393,100 persons) 7.3%;

education (35,161 persons) 0.7%; the language most frequently used in public interaction (515,312 persons) 9.5%; the language most frequently used at home (728,910 persons) 13.5%; denominational affiliation (571,437 persons) 10.6%. <http://portal.statistics.sk/showdoc.do?docid=43829>



the formal verification of the forms submitted, nor can they inquire specifically about the missing data in the case of incomplete questionnaires. This was one of the major reasons for the significant proportion of non-responses to certain questions already in the 1991 and 2001 censuses.<sup>12</sup>

A further characteristic feature of the 2011 census is that the number of those not having filled in the form (about 70 thousand persons) was not negligible, either. The data of the missing questionnaires were generated with the help of statistical procedures. An even more important feature of last year's census data collection was that a sort of countercampaign evolved against the census. The Slovak Statistical Office guaranteed anonymity to the population. However, this anonymity was questioned by the countercampaign.

The evolution of the non-response rate regarding ethnic affiliation correlates with several other factors regarding content. Let me point out only a few of them: the size of the settlements, the ratio of ethnic Hungarians living in the settlement, and the ratio of the Romani. The non-response rate increases with the population of the settlements<sup>13</sup>, it is directly proportionate to the number of the Roma living in the settlements, but it is inversely related to the proportion of ethnic Hungarians. (The population of the settlements is  $\beta=0.137$ , the proportion of ethnic Hungarians is  $\beta=-0.90$ , the proportion of the Roma is  $\beta=0.136$ ).

As such, the high non-response rate cannot be explained by the wavering self-identification of the Hungarian population. In consideration of the distribution of non-response by the size of the settlement and the degree of urbanization of the settlement, the number of ethnic Hungarians is estimated to be about 20 thousand higher than their registered number. At the same time, based on the data to be published at a later time, we have to take into account at least one more factor affecting the number of those of unknown ethnicity.

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<sup>12</sup> In 1991, the question pertaining to the denominational affiliation remained unanswered by 17.4% of the respondents, whereas in 2001, 22.7% of the responses were unknown concerning the distribution by economic sector and economic activity.

<sup>13</sup> We could also say that those of unknown ethnicity lead to greater uncertainty in the analysis of the ethnic distribution of urban population rather than in the case of rural population. 9.7% of the urban population and 4.0% of the village population did not identify their ethnic affiliation.

In the distribution of those with an unknown ethnicity, we have to consider the composition of the population by citizenship. In 2001, the majority of those with unknown citizenship (59 percent) were non-Slovak citizens. In other words, the ratio of non-response was much lower among Slovak citizens than in the total population. Considering this last factor that may reduce the estimated number of ethnic Hungarians, we can estimate the Hungarian population at about 470 thousand persons instead of the 458 thousand persons registered.

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# **Ethnopolitics. Elections**



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Andrea Bocskor – Karolina Darcsi

## Hungarian parties in Subcarpathia (Ukraine)

Before studying the question of Hungarian parties in Transcarpathia (Ukraine) we have to define the most important concepts that belong to the topic.

The concept of *minority representation* is of fundamental importance for people living in ethnic minority status both for their survival and political self-representation. It may determine whether the Hungarians can become an integral part of the political system of Ukraine, in a way that is organized on a national basis and differs from the majority society, thus ensuring their survival. Thus, the most important question of minority existence is whether the given minority is able to organize itself and represent its interests by engaging in the decision making process.

The concept of the *majority state* is the main center of power that determines the retention or assimilation of national minorities who are residents on its territory. The state may either follow the European way in its minority politics by creating the necessary conditions for the survival and development of minority communities or by rejecting these options.

The concept of the *kin-state* is important in minority survival because the kin-state provides political protection through the channels of diplomacy and finance and provides cultural supports which can guarantee and strengthen minority interests.

### The legal status of minorities in Ukraine

In Ukraine the legal status of the minorities are defined by the following documents:

- The Constitution of Ukraine (1996),
- Ukraine's Declaration of Nationality Rights (1991),
- The Law of Ukraine on National Minorities (1992);

All of the above is supplemented by a great number of decrees. Statements with special focus on the Hungarian community can be found in various bilateral agreements between Ukraine and Hungary (e.g. The treaty between the Hungarian Republic and Ukraine about the basis of good neighborliness and cooperation (1991), Declaration of the principles of cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in guaranteeing the rights of national minorities (1991)) and in the suggestions of the Ukrainian-Hungarian Inter-state Joint Commission).

### **Political representation of Hungarians in Ukraine – historical background**

The Hungarian community of Ukraine – nearly 150 thousand people – is mostly concentrated in the lowlands of Transcarpathia county [Kárpátalja megye/Zakarpatska oblast], where they form the largest minority group of the local population (they constitute 12,1 % of the total population).

During the existence of the Soviet Union, there was no chance of representing the interests of national minorities. The Hungarian minority was accused of collective guilt, and annexed to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, where it had a weak legal standing. Resolution №52 adopted on November 26, 1944 at the first Congress of People's Committees of Transcarpathian Ukraine declare the collective guilt of Hungarians, saying that the Hungarians and Germans are eternal enemies of the Ukrainian nation. This resolution was the ideological basis for the deportation of the Hungarian male population (aged 18-50) in November and December, 1944.

A group of Transcarpathian Hungarian intellectuals addressed petitions to the Soviet government in 1971 and 1972, in which they asked for the abrogation of the document mentioned above. However, the authors of the petitions were called to account, and the resolution is still in force even today. These petitions were the first documents which dealt with the fundamental rights of Transcarpathian Hungarians and the violations they suffered. These were signed by more than a thousand of people living in Transcarpathia.

In the period of political transformation of the '80-ies an opportunity opened for the Transcarpathian Hungarians to make a step towards self-organization. Numerous professional, civic, cultural and political organizations formed in that period in order to facilitate the survival of the Hungarian community, and represent its interests in the newly independent Ukraine.

Due to this process today in Transcarpathia two political parties endeavor to represent the Hungarians' political interests: the Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association – Hungarian Party in Ukraine (hereafter KMKSZ UMP) and the Hungarian Democratic Party in Ukraine (hereafter UMDP). Both of the parties were established because of the change of the electoral system in 2006/2007. Previously they were functioning only as cultural associations under the following names: Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association (hereafter KMKSZ) and the Democratic Association of Hungarians Living in Ukraine (hereafter UMDSZ).<sup>1</sup>

The Ukrainian electoral system has been changed many times since the country became independent. The majoritarian electoral system was applied in 1990 and in 1994; the mixed voting system in 1998 and in 2002; the proportional representation in 2006 and in 2007. In 2012 the country returned to the mixed system.

These changes affected the interest representation opportunities of national minorities in different ways. In the majoritarian and mixed electoral systems the ethnic interests were mostly taken into account during the formation of electoral districts. Thus the Transcarpathian Hungarians had the chance for parliamentary presence through the creation of a Hungarian-majority single-member district within the compact Hungarian ethnic block of the county.

The situation of national minorities was affected the most negatively by the transition to the proportional voting system. It became impossible for any national minority to pass the 3% election threshold specified by law within the 46 million-populated country, except for the Russians.

Due to the proportional voting system, after the 2006 and 2007 elections it was the first time since 1994, that the Transcarpathian

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<sup>1</sup> We use here the original Hungarian abbreviations.

Hungarians did not have a representative in the Ukrainian Parliament [Verkhovna Rada].

### Political activity of the KMKSZ

On February 26, 1989 the Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association (KMKSZ) was formed at Ungvár/Uzhgorod as a cultural, national and social organization that protected interests of Transcarpathian Hungarians. The registration of the association as a political party was not permitted by the authorities at that time, but it has nonetheless played a political and interest-safeguarding role from the very beginning.<sup>2</sup> Today it is the largest ethnic-based organization of the region. According to its register the association has 105 local groups and about 40 thousands members.

Until 2006 the electoral system did not bind the nomination of candidates to political parties, thus the KMKSZ being a cultural association was still able to nominate candidates for MP in order to represent the interests of Hungarians both on the local and on the national governmental levels.

In 1990 – still within the Soviet Union – parliamentary and municipal elections were held, in which the KMKSZ nominated its own candidates, and the cultural association managed to send 11 representatives to the County Council. Its candidates also got into the District Councils of Beregszász/Berehovo, Ungvár/ Uzhgorod and Nagyszőlős/ Vynohradiv.

After the political transformation in the 1990-es the Hungarians living abroad saw their survival in the development of a minority institutional system, including the creation of autonomy and self-governance.<sup>3</sup> The KMKSZ has undertaken the representation of the Transcarpathian Hungarians' aspiration for autonomy since its formation. In 1991 the association initiated a referendum on the autonomy of Transcarpathia that was supported by 98% of the local

<sup>2</sup> MÓRICZ K. (2001): *Kárpátalja sorsfordulói*. Hatodik Síp Alapítvány, Budapest, pp. 147–151.

<sup>3</sup> KÁNTOR Z. (2006): Autonómia, önkormányzatiság és kisebbségi magyar közösség-építés. Nemzetállamok, nemzeti kisebbségek, nemzeti autonómiák. In: SZÉKELY I. szerk. (2006) *Magyar Kisebbség*. 2006/3–4, pp. 66–90.



population. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine won its independence and set the stage for creating democratic institutions, implying the possibility that in the future the national minorities that had lived under oppression during the years of dictatorship might now exist within a democratic framework. However, it soon became apparent, that for a country that started the building of a majority nation-state, the democratic framework did not apply to national minorities. The European practice of facilitating the survival of national minorities and preservation of their identity, granting additional rights were not introduced. Despite the minority population's clearly expressed will the autonomy plans could not be realized, as they encountered serious resistance both from the side of the authorities and the political powers that imagined Ukraine as an ethnically homogeneous state.<sup>4</sup>

### Political activity of the UMDSZ

In order to represent Transcarpathian Hungarians on a nation-wide level the KMKSZ together with the Associations of Hungarians of Lviv and Kyiv, founded the Democratic Association of Hungarians Living in Ukraine (UMDSZ). Conflicts of interests occurred soon within the UMDSZ. Different goals were formulated by the Hungarians living in Lviv, Kyiv and Transcarpathia. Objectives of Transcarpathian Hungarians living in large enclaves are different: in Transcarpathia having schools with Hungarian as a language of instruction and political safeguarding of interests represented the main aims. However aims of Hungarians who live scattered in Ukrainian cities are those of having Sunday schools and mother tongue clubs. As the members failed to reach a common position, the KMKSZ suspended its membership in the UMDSZ, which exists only theoretically as it had not been able to achieve practical results either in the political or in the cultural sphere so far.

The union worked for a long time in theory only, it did not carry out any kind of activity. It was reorganized in 1996 and Mihály Tóth

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<sup>4</sup> KACSUR G. szerk. (1999): *Tíz és a kárpátaljai magyarság szolgálatában. A KMKSZ X. közgyűlése*, Ugocsa Print, Nagyszőlős, pp. 14–17.

was elected as its president. The renewal of the UMDSZ primarily served Mihály Tóth's continued leadership ambitions.

The next reorganization and reform of the UMDSZ took place in 2002, after the parliamentary elections. The UMDSZ supported István Gajdos, who similarly to Mihály Tóth took part in the elections as the president of the district administrative office and the opponent of the KMKSZ nominee. After the elections, having undertaken the Hungarian issues, István Gajdos needed to legitimate himself by an organization in front of both the Transcarpathian Hungarians as well as the kin-state (Hungary), thus in 2002 he took over the presidential seat of the UMDSZ from Mihály Tóth. Since then István Gajdos has reformed the UMDSZ, which now follows an analogous model to KMKSZ and functions as an alternative Hungarian organization.

### **Parliamentary elections between 1990 and 2010 and Hungarian representation**

In 1994 parliamentary and municipal elections were held in Ukraine. Some conflicts emerged within the KMKSZ in connection with the nomination of candidates. The local Hungarians were strongly divided by the campaign. The president of the KMKSZ did not manage to get a mandate. On the county level, nine Hungarian representatives were elected to the sixty-member council.

On August 5, 1994 the Committee of the Beregszász/Berehovo District of the KMKSZ decided to cut free from the KMKSZ and founded an independent organization – the Hungarian Cultural Association of the Bereg Lands. Their founders' meeting was held on November 5, 1994 with the participation of 117 delegates from 35 local groups. The new association managed to get 2,300 members and formed 38 local groups. Shortly after the separation of the Beregszász/Berehovo District, other towns founded independent organizations too. As a result: the Association of Hungarians of the Ung Lands, the Cultural Association of Hungarians of Szolyva/Svalyava and the Cultural Association of Hungarians of Técső/Tyachiv were founded.

On August 6, 1994 the organizations that had separated from the KMKSZ founded the Forum of Transcarpathian Hungarian Organi-

zations consisting of the above mentioned and the Transcarpathian Community of Hungarian Intellectuals (the latter was founded on April 30, 1993 and defining itself as an intellectual association).

The next elections were held in 1998. The KMKSZ managed to send a deputy to the Supreme Council from the Hungarian polling district in the person of a new leader, Miklós Kovács (who had become the president of the association in 1996), to represent the interests of Transcarpathian Hungarians. However the Hungarians had only four representatives in the County Council.

The next elections in Ukraine were held in 2002. The KMKSZ nominated its president in the elections again. His main election opponent in the one-mandate district was István Gajdos, the president of the Beregszász/Berehovo District State Administrative Office, who was nominated and supported by the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine. Based on the incoming reports the winner of the elections in the district was the president of the KMKSZ. However, the results were not officially declared and there were a series of modifications. According to the decision of the Supreme Court of Ukraine the mandate in the district was won by István Gajdos, thus till 2006 he was the representative. The case reached the Strasbourg Court of Human Rights. Six years later the president of the KMKSZ won the lawsuit against the state of Ukraine.

In 2002 on the local level seven Hungarian representatives got into the eighty-five-member County Council.

In 2006, 2007 the proportional electoral system came into being. Only nationally registered parties were able nominate candidates in the parliamentary elections near the election threshold of 3%. Adapting to the new voting system, both of the Hungarian organizations started the formation of their own parties. The KMKSZ established the KMKSZ – Hungarian Party in Ukraine (hereafter KMKSZ UMP), the UMDSZ established the Hungarian Democratic Party in Ukraine (hereafter UMDP). They took part in the elections separately.

In the parliamentary and municipal elections of 2006 the problem of „standing on different sides” did not exceed the 3% threshold, on the contrary it worsened the chances of Transcarpathian Hungarians on getting into the legislative assembly.

On the parliamentary level, both organizations were given positions on the lists of Ukrainian parties, but none of them was eligible

for a parliamentary seat. It was the first time since 1994 that no Hungarian deputy got into the Supreme Council.

In Transcarpathia after the parliamentary and municipal elections of 2006 the two Hungarian parties competing with each other suffered a dual defeat. On the county level, the KMKSZ UMP received 17,692 votes that meant five seats in the ninety-member County Council. The UMDP received 17,465 votes and four seats.

The 2007 early parliamentary elections further widened the gap between the two parties. The two organizations took part in the elections separately again. The KMKSZ UMP supported the election bloc entitled 'Nasha Ukrayina' [Our Ukraine] that granted the ninety-ninth position for Miklós Kovács on its list. The association asked for the cooperation and support of the UMDP. But the party supported the Socialist Party of Ukraine instead, on whose party-list Mihály Tóth, their own man, was included. After the elections the socialists did not get into the parliament, and the ninety-ninth position of the 'Nasha Ukrayina' was not enough to get a mandate. The Transcarpathian Hungarians were left without parliamentary representation again.

The results of the 2010 municipal elections were staggering. The KMKSZ UMP and the UMDP took part in the elections separately again. Even if the sum of votes that the two parties received separately were added together they added up to less than the number of ethnic Hungarian voters in Transcarpathia. The majority of Transcarpathian Hungarians sold their votes for 100-150 Ukrainian hryvna, a sum being equal to 3,000-4,000 Hungarian forints and voted for Ukrainian parties instead of the two Hungarian organizations. While the KMKSZ UMP got three seats UMDP got four in the 108-member County Council. On the district level the Hungarians also lost their former positions, nowhere did they receive a Hungarian majority, which significantly weakened the local representation of the interests of Transcarpathian Hungarians.

The last modification of the electoral system in Ukraine has been carried out in 2011.

The reintroduction of the mixed system could have affected the opportunities of the Hungarian representation of interest positively, because a polling district with a Hungarian majority would have resulted in restoring of the parliamentary representation.

## 2012 – the year of elections in Ukraine

The Central Election Commission of Ukraine (CVK)<sup>5</sup> marked the borders of polling districts on April 28, 2012. The establishment of the Hungarian polling district was supported by several international organizations, the Government of Hungary and by the local political parties KMKSZ UMP and UMDP. However, contrary to expectations a Hungarian majority polling district was not formed in Transcarpathia. Hungarian people, living in a block, were divided into three different districts, forming minority groups in all of them.

About 25,6 thousand Hungarian voters belonged to Constituency №68, which center was in Ungvár/Uzhgorod. In the district the proportion of Hungarian voters was only about 16.1%. About 28,5 thousand Hungarian voters were attached to Constituency №69, which center was in Munkács/Mukachevo; in the district the proportion of Hungarians was only 17.8%. The third Constituency №73 based on the town Nagyszőlős/Vynohradiv was considered as „the most Hungarian” district, however the proportion of Hungarians here was 33.6%, but they were in a minority position here as well; in the constituency there were 49 418 voters out of the total of 147 026 Hungarians.<sup>6</sup>

The KMKSZ UMP had one nominee in each of the single-member polling districts. In the Constituency №68 László Brenzovics, vice-president of the KMKSZ was nominated, in the Constituency №69 Géza Gulácsy, the other vice-president of the association was fighting for the votes, while in the Constituency №73 Miklós Kovács, president of the KMKSZ launched his campaign.<sup>7</sup>

István Gajdos, president of the UMDSZ and UMDP, was not nominated in the colors of his own party, but was nominated on the party list of the ruling Party of Regions (PR) on the 74th position.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> [www.cvk.gov.ua](http://www.cvk.gov.ua)

<sup>6</sup> A KMKSZ elítélte a magyarellenese döntést. Parlamenti választások: Eldőlt – nem lesz magyar körzet. *Kárpátalja hetilap* №590, 05.04.2012

<sup>7</sup> Három körzetben indít jelöltet a magyar szervezet. Ülészett a KMKSZ Választmány. *Kárpátalja hetilap* №604, 09. 10.2012

<sup>8</sup> Kárpátalján parlamenti mandátumra esélyes listás helyet kapott az UMDSZ elnöke. *MTI* 08.13.2012. Retrieved from: <http://www.umdsz.uz.ua/news2012/augusztus/20120813-idehaza.html> Date: 09.17.2012

The UMDSZ supports and campaigns for the Ukrainian nationality nominees of Party of Regions in Hungarian districts.

Between the main topics of the 2012 campaign the new language law of Ukraine adopted just before the elections was especially emphasized. In the campaign launched by the UMDP and the Party of Regions (PR) advantages of the law for Hungarians were highlighted. At the same time leading politicians of PR (Chechetov and German) stated that the language law refers to the Russian minority only. On the part of PR nobody has distanced themselves from these statements.<sup>9</sup> Contradictions appear not only in the interpretation of the new law, but also in the realization of it (how can it be applied). Another hot topic was the question of dual citizenship. Just before the elections, a law has been accepted fining people having dual-citizenship.

None of the parties, which had nominees in Transcarpathia's single-member polling districts support the language law, dual-citizenship, or the self-governance of the county.

In polling districts of Transcarpathia the biggest competition emerged among nominees of the PR and the Uniformed Centre, dominant political force of the county. In the six individual electoral districts of Transcarpathia mandates had been shared between three Regions Party candidates and three candidates of the Uniformed Centre. County turnout was 51.6%, which is one of the lowest ratio in the country.

In the Constituency №73, Busko Ivan (41.22%, 31,517 votes) came out on top, leaving behind the single candidate of the Uniformed Center Ivan Baloga (36.1%, 27,602 votes). President of the the KMKSZ, Miklós Kovács finished in the third place with 10.41% (7963) of votes. The Ungvár/Uzhgorod centered Constituency №68 was won by Vasil Kovacs (31.14%, 30,054 votes). Vice-president of the KMKSZ, László Brenzovics finished in fifth place (7.73%, 7461 votes). In the individual Constituency №69, Viktor Baloga, leader of the Uniformed Center got a mandate in the district (34,970 votes 49.42%). Vice-president of the KMKSZ, Gulácsy Geza finished in the fourth place (10.59%, 7,498 votes). Nominees of the Hungarian Association collected totally 23,440 votes, however they did not managed to get mandates.

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<sup>9</sup> A kormánypártnak nem tetszenek a magyarok. *Kárpátinfo*. Retrieved from: <http://karpatinfo.net/cikk/politika-ukrajna/kormanypartnak-nem-tetszenek-magyarok>, Date: 11.03.2012.

According to the party list results in Transcarpathia county, PR won the election gaining 30.94% of the votes. Many analysts maintained that this happened because of the votes of the Hungarian people. Gajdos István, president of the UMDSZ managed to enter the Parliament being nominated on the electoral list of the PR. The party of 'Batykivscsina' United Opposition got the second place in Transcarpathia (27.66%), while the party 'UDAR' became the third (19.99%). It is definitely a concern that the radically-right party 'Svoboda', which is well-known for its anti-Hungarian manifestations, entered the parliament and obtained 8.34% of the total votes within the county. The Communist Party of Ukraine also got 5.03% of the Transcarpathian votes.

Summarizing the 2012 elections we can conclude that intimidation, corruption and cheating before and during the elections had serious effects on the final results. 'Administrative power' and its staff led to the support of its own nominees.

Finally we can state that in Transcarpathia, there are lots of Hungarian professional, civic and religious organizations, but the KMKSZ UMP is politically the most significant organization of Transcarpathian Hungarians which expresses its opinion about all questions concerning the minority. The UMDP also seemed to campaign with the questions concerning the problems of the Hungarian minority, however it is still a question if its leader, as a Party of Regions' MP could really protect the Hungarian interests, if these interests would conflict with the interests of the PR?

Finally we conclude that the division, political fragmentation of the small Transcarpathian Hungarian community is the most serious problem of the effective interest-representation in the country which is home to 46 million people.





## **2012 Elections in Serbia: New Political Landscape in Belgrade, Reduction of Minority Hungarian Representation**

Parliamentary, provincial, local, and early presidential elections were held on 6th May 2012 in Serbia. Boris Tadić (Democratic Party) had resigned nine months before the end of his presidential term and called for early presidential elections, because he expected a greater chance of being re-elected if all the elections were held on the same day. Moreover, Tadić hoped to improve his party's positions on the parliamentary, provincial and local level with his candidacy. Preliminary surveys had justified Tadić's belief on his chances, however, the final results of the presidential elections proved to be a bitter surprise for the former Serbian president. His rival, Tomislav Nikolić, nominee of the Serbian Progressive Party was elected president, and Nikolić's party turned out to be the winner of the parliamentary elections as well. Consequently, a significant transformation in the Serbian domestic scene is to be expected. This paper examines the results of the parliamentary elections; moreover, it will put more emphasis on the analysis of the results of the provincial and local elections in Vojvodina, since those results are more important concerning the situation of the Hungarian minority in Serbia.

### **Parliamentary elections (Republican level)**

Single ballot parliamentary elections were held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2012 for the Belgrade legislature. Voter turnout was 57,77%, which means that 3,911,136 out of 6,770,013 cast a ballot. Preliminary surveys predicted the victory of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), and this prognosis, unlike the one about the presidential elections, proved to be true. 24,04% voted for the Progressive Party, while the rival Democratic Party achieved 22,11%. Accordingly, SNS has 73 and Democrats have 67 mandates in the Parliament. The Socialist Party

(SPS) was backed by 14,53 % (44 mandates), the Democratic Party of Serbia (not identical with the Democratic Party!) gained 7% (21 mandates), ‘Turnover’, an alliance led by the Liberal Democrats obtained 6,52% (19 mandates), and the United Regions of Serbia reached 5,49% (16 mandates).

| Party                                  | Mandate |
|--|---------|
| Serbian Progressive Party              | 73      |
| Democratic Party                       | 67      |
| Socialist Party of Serbia*             | 44      |
| Democratic Party of Serbia             | 21      |
| Turnover**                             | 19      |
| United Regions of Serbia               | 16      |
| Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians       | 5       |
| Party of Democratic Action of Sandžak  | 2       |
| All Together                           | 1       |
| None of the Above (Vlach Party)        | 1       |
| Albanian Coalition from Preševo Valley | 1       |

\* Joint list of the Socialist Party of Serbia, Party of United Pensioners of Serbia, and United Serbia.

\*\* Led by the Liberal Democratic Party.

Among the parties of minorities; the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians gained 1,77% resulting in 5 representatives in parliament, the Party of Democratic Action of Sandžak obtained 0,69% (2 mandates), and both the list of ‘All Together’ (formed by Croatian, Hungarian, Bosniak, Slovak and Macedonian ethnic minority parties) and the Albanian Coalition from Preševo Valley acquired 1 mandate. Two Hungarian parties<sup>1</sup> joined the list of ‘All Together’; the Democratic Fellowship of Vojvodina Hungarians and the Hungarian Civic Alliance; however, the arrival position of the ‘All Together’ list was occupied by Emir Elfić, president of the Bosniak Democratic Union. Although 15 Hungarian candidates were nominated on the ‘All Together’ list (for example, Áron Csonka, president of Democratic Fellowship of Vojvodina

<sup>1</sup> Vojvodina-Hungarians are deeply divided politically; in 2012, 5 Hungarian parties contested for the votes of ethnic Hungarians. It is the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians that could register its lists for the presidential, parliamentary, provincial and local elections as well, the other four Hungarian parties mostly participated only in the local elections.

Hungarians on the 5<sup>th</sup> and László Rác Szabó, president of Hungarian Civic Alliance on the 15<sup>th</sup> place), there was no actual chance for the Hungarian candidates on the 'All Together' list to win parliamentary mandates. The remaining two Hungarian parties – Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians and Hungarian Hope Movement – could not register their lists for the parliamentary elections. A curiosity among the minority lists was the Vlach party, whose list was named 'None of The Above'; the party recruiting its supporters on Facebook and could obtain one parliamentary mandate.

### **Serbian parliament after the 2012 elections<sup>2</sup>**

The Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians had 4 Members of Parliament in the previous term, so in the 2012 elections it was able to expand its presence in parliament to 5 mandates. It is important to note, however, that this improvement was not due to the number of votes given to the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (AVH) but rather to the system of the Serbian parliamentary elections that, in this case, favored the Hungarian party. Nevertheless, the AVH doubted the correctness of the Serbian elections; according to István Pásztor, president of AVH, a significant number of votes was stolen from the party in the presidential, parliamentary, and provincial elections. It was not only the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians that criticized the transparency of the parliamentary elections; both the Serbian Progressive Party and the United Regions of Serbia expressed similar claims. Moreover, the Republican Electoral Commission reported electoral fraud as well. Some even claimed that the volume of the electoral fraud resembled that of the Milošević era (Tomislav Nikolić stated that the register of voters contained 5,000 non-existing or already dead persons), and although the elections had to be held repeatedly in several places because of the objections raised, the elections were not annulled by the Electoral Commission.

The process of government formation was delayed long after the elections. According to the first speculations, a Democratic–Socialist coalition was expected, possibly in alliance with the Party of United

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<sup>2</sup> More information on the results of the elections available on the website of the Republican Electoral Commission [http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/latinica/propisi\\_frames.htm](http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/latinica/propisi_frames.htm)

Pensioners of Serbia, United Serbia and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians. This scenario, however, was soon abandoned, and many other alternatives came to the fore. Finally, the Socialist Party of Serbia was asked to form a government, but only after the second round of the presidential and provincial elections. The reason why it took so long to form the coalition is manifold – and here we have to refer at least to the anxiety surrounding the Progressive Party.

Tomislav Nikolić was vice-president of the Serbian Radical Party until 2008. The president of the party is Vojislav Šešelj, who is currently on trial for alleged war crimes and is suspected of being involved in crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague. The nationalist Radical Party was a coalition partner of Slobodan Milošević between 1998 and 2000, and is well-known for its anti-minority (Croatian, Albanian, Hungarian, etc.) declarations, anti-European politics, and its commitment to keep Kosovo under Serbian authority. In 2008, a fraction led by Tomislav Nikolić seceded from the Radical Party, and soon after they organized themselves into the Serbian Progressive Party. The reason for the break with Šešelj and his radical companions was their refusal to ratify of the Stabilization and Association Agreement signed with the EU, while Nikolić and his followers supported the ratification of the Agreement. We might say that standing for EU-integration was a surprising turnaround from the hitherto radical Nikolić; however, political analysts claim that the foundation of a new party was a realistic move on the part of Nikolić, since even the disappointed radical voters saw the only chance for the economic recovery in the European Union by 2008. Time has confirmed Nikolić's tactics, since the newly founded Serbian Progressive Party obtained the overwhelming majority of the Radical Party's voters already in 2008.<sup>3</sup>

Considering Nikolić's recent attitude towards the EU, it can be predicted with certainty that Serbia will not leave the path of European integration during his presidential term. However, we cannot neglect the public anxiety concerning the newly elected Serbian president, which are evoked by some of Nikolić's statements, or rather by the rhetoric that is a "heritage" of his former radical party. Soon

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.mon.hu/hirek/frisshirek/cikk/visszaszorulo-radikalisok-szerbiaban/cn/haon-news-charlotteInform-20081116-0151397300>

after his election, Nikolić declared in a Montenegrin TV interview that what happened in Srebrenica in 1995 was not genocide but only a “grievous crime”. In the same interview did he express his view that Montenegro should not have to secede from Serbia, since he “cannot see any difference between the two nations”<sup>4</sup>. He did not succeed in establishing good neighborliness with Croatia either with his comment that Vukovar is not a Croatian town, so Croatian refugees do not have to return there. Both the American and European Union diplomacy disapproved of the abovementioned statements; moreover, neither the Croatian, nor the Bosnian, nor the Slovenian president attended in Nikolić’s presidential inauguration. Consequently, we might conclude that Nikolić’s presidency might not be completely conflictless.

Not only did the Serbian Progressive Party obtain the presidency but they gained a relative majority of the votes in the parliamentary elections as well, thus transforming the Serbian domestic scene. However, their possible coalition partners seemed to be unwilling to form an alliance with the “post-radical” party, even if the Progressives share very similar views with the former-governing Democrats on the major questions (e.g. EU-accession, non-recognition of Kosovo as an independent state). Finally, the Socialist Party of Serbia was asked to form a government, which party chose the Progressive Party and the United Regions of Serbia as partners. Considering the outcome of the coalition talks, namely that the Socialists turned to the Progressive party rather than to their former ally, the Democrats, one might conclude that the hesitation was not due to ideological differences but rather to political bargaining. Ivica Dačić, president of the Socialist Party, became prime minister, although this position should have been reserved for the most powerful party of the coalition, that is, for the Progressive Party. Supposedly, the Democratic Party would not have given up the prime minister’s position for the Socialists; therefore the prime minister’s position must have played a key role during the coalition talks. Moreover, the second round of the presidential elections with the victory of Tomislav Nikolić made the Progressive Party even more attractive as a coalition partner.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://index.hu/kulfold/2012/06/01/nikolic\\_srebrenicaban\\_nem\\_volt\\_nepirtas/](http://index.hu/kulfold/2012/06/01/nikolic_srebrenicaban_nem_volt_nepirtas/)

As already mentioned, the final results of the presidential elections turned out to be a surprise, since surveys predicted a better chance for Boris Tadić, and the results of the first round further confirmed this suggestion (Tadić 25,31%, Nikolić 25,05%). 12 candidates raced in the first round of the presidential elections, among them István Pásztor, president of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians. Pásztor made it clear prior to the elections that his candidacy only serves the aim of having a better bargaining position; in case Pásztor would have withdrawn in the second round to support Tadić, and Tadić was reelected president, surely it would have been quite beneficial for the Hungarian party. However, after the first round of the elections, when the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians suspected significant electoral fraud, Pásztor declared that he would not back Tadić in the second run if it turns out that the Democratic Party was involved in the fraud. Finally, Pásztor kept to the original plan, and called the Hungarians to vote for Tadić in the second run, although he publically expressed his personal disappointment in the Democratic Party and in Serbian democracy as well.<sup>5</sup>

The results of the first round of the presidential elections were the following:

Boris Tadić (Democratic Party) 25,31%;  
Tomislav Nikolić (Serbian Progressive Party) 25,05%;  
Ivica Dacic (Socialist Party of Serbia) 14,23%,  
Vojislav Kostunica (Democratic Party of Serbia) 7,44%,  
Zoran Stankovic (United Regions of Serbia) 6,58%,  
Cedomir Jovanovic (Liberal Democratic Party) 5,03%,  
Jadranka Seselj (Serbian Radical Party) 3,78%,  
Vladan Glisic (independent, supported by Dveri) 2,77%,  
Pásztor István (Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians) 1,62%,  
Zoran Dragisic (independent, supported by Movement of Workers and Peasants of Serbia) 1,54%,  
Muamer Zukorlic (independent, mufti of the Islamic Community of Serbia) 1,39%,  
Danica Grujicic (Social Democratic Alliance) 0,78%

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.magyarszo.com/fex.page:2012-05-17\\_Pasztor\\_Istvan\\_Az\\_elnokvalasztason\\_Boris\\_Tadicot.xhtml](http://www.magyarszo.com/fex.page:2012-05-17_Pasztor_Istvan_Az_elnokvalasztason_Boris_Tadicot.xhtml)

The second round of the presidential elections brought about the victory of Tomislav Nikolić, who won 49,51% of the votes, while Tadić won 47,35%. According to analysts, the Progressive Party was successful in mobilizing its supporters, while the Democrats took the victory granted and therefore did not make enough efforts to mobilize their voters. Voter turnout confirms this supposition; while it was 57,7% in the first round, it fell back to 46,3% in the second round. It is worth mentioning that Boris Tadić “won” both rounds of the presidential elections in the territory of Vojvodina.

After having seen the success of the Serbian Progressive Party in the parliamentary and presidential elections, it is worth paying some attention to the campaign as well. As it is known, Serbia has taken steps to prove its commitment to European integration recently. A major stage on its way to the EU was completed in March 2012 by receiving full candidate status. The presidency of Boris Tadić played a crucial role for speeding up the process; he was able to fulfill the requirements set by the EU (judiciary reforms, improvement of democracy, human and minority rights, etc.), while at the same time consistently keeping to the principal of not recognizing Kosovo. It seems that Tadić’s achievements were not convincing enough for the Serbian citizens to reelect him, which was probably due to the current economic situation of the country rather than the low prestige of the EU-candidacy. Although Serbian citizens still favored EU-integration in 2012, actual crises management must have been more attractive than the advancement of EU-accession for a population hit by high rates of unemployment and financial difficulties. Consequently, it is not surprising that in this situation, a post-radical party with a populist campaign had greater chance than a party that – although it had achieved great results in the accession process, but – failed to manage the economic crises. Thus, principles and ideologies did not matter much in the 2012 elections in Serbia, which is supported by the fact that the Progressive Party is basically in agreement with the Democrats on issues like Kosovo or EU-accession. The only difference between them can be traced in the more nationalist rhetoric of the Progressives (see above the first utterances of Nikolić). Now let us turn our attention to the results of the provincial elections.

## Provincial elections

The provincial legislature in Vojvodina was elected in two rounds; in the first round (6 May), 60 members (out of 120) were elected from party lists, while the second round (20 May) – since none of the individual candidates acquired the absolute majority of votes in the first round – decided on the remaining 60 seats by selecting individual candidates. The Democratic Party scored a victory in the provincial elections (remember that Tadić defeated Nikolić in Vojvodina in the presidential elections as well). The results were the following:

| Party                                   | Mandate |
|---|---------|
| Democratic Party                        | 58      |
| Serbian Progressive Party               | 22      |
| Socialist Party of Serbia               | 13      |
| League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina | 10      |
| Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians        | 7       |
| Serbian Radical Party                   | 5       |
| Democratic Party of Serbia              | 4       |
| Turnover                                | 1       |

As it is shown in the table, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians was the only Hungarian party out of 5 which won seats in the provincial parliament. The Alliance had 9 members in the Novi Sad parliament in the previous term, therefore the 2012 results are not reassuring at all. A positive feature is, however, that István Pásztor, president of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians was elected president of the Provincial Assembly of Vojvodina.

The statutory meeting of the Provincial Assembly was held 22 June 2012. The government was formed by a coalition of the Democratic Party, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians and the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina. Bojan Pajtić (Democratic Party) became president of the government (similarly to the previous term). The portfolio of education, governance and ethnic communities was given to Andor Deli, politician of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians; all other portfolios are led by the Democrats (except culture and youth, which are held by the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina).

Among the Hungarian parties, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians and the Hungarian Hope Movement was able to register a list for



the provincial elections. Moreover, further ethnic Hungarian candidates were present on the list of the already mentioned 'All Together' group, since the Democratic Fellowship of Vojvodina Hungarians and the Hungarian Civic Alliance cooperated with other minority communities in order to constitute a joint minority list. However, mandates in the provincial parliament were only won by the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians.<sup>6</sup> Although it did not succeed in registering a list for the provincial elections, one of the individual candidates of the Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarian, András Gusztony, (municipality: Temerin) did enter the second round of the elections. Unfortunately, he did not win the mandate. It is widely known that the Hungarian party structure in Vojvodina is the most fragmented one among the minority Hungarian communities in the Carpathian Basin; there were 5 Hungarian parties to choose from in 2012. Founded in 1989, the Democratic Fellowship of Vojvodina Hungarians (DFVH) succeeded in winning the overwhelming majority of Hungarian votes on the 1990 elections, however, the promising situation came to a halt with the first schism in 1994. A fraction seceded from the DFVH, and founded the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (AVH). Another schism followed the DFVH's failure in the parliamentary elections in 1997<sup>7</sup>; Vice-president Sándor Páll initiated the dismissal of founding-president András Ágoston from the presidential position. Ágoston's response was, however, secession and the foundation of a new party: the Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians (DPVH). Following the year 2000, new formations emerged: the Hungarian Civic Alliance and the Hungarian Hope Movement. Despite this pluralism of Hungarian parties, the majority of Hungarian votes goes to the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (AVH) since 1996, therefore the AVH is the only Hungarian party that is able to represent the interests of Vojvodina Hungarians on every level of the Serbian politics, on the local, provincial and national (Belgrade parliament) levels.

In December 2011, the four Hungarian parties of the „opposition” (DFVH, DPVH Hungarian Hope Movement, and Hungarian Civic Alliance) decided to unite on a joint list named “Hungarian Turnover”

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.pik.skupstinavojvodine.gov.rs/docs/2012izvestajUkupniRezultati.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> The Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians obtained approx. twice as many votes as the DFVH in the 1997 elections.

in order to challenge the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians on every level of the 2012 elections, and by doing so, offering an alternative choice for the Hungarian voters. However, the idea of the Hungarian Turnover coalition died soon, since, - after Viktor Orbán's (prime minister of Hungary) visit to Vojvodina it became evident that the Hungarian government would support the campaign of AVH, - the DPVH declared its refrain from participating in the parliamentary elections. On the other hand, András Ágoston (president of DPVH) emphasized that on the local and provincial level they would weaken the chances of AVH. I believe that this statement describes well that the plurality of Hungarian parties in Vojvodina is rather based on personal conflicts than on ideological differences. Meanwhile, the minority parties of the 'All Together' list began negotiating with the Hungarian parties as well, and it soon turned out that the DFBH and the Hungarian Civic Alliance would be willing to cooperate with other minority parties (Croatian, Slovak, Bosniak) in the frames of such a list in order to achieve better results. The Hungarian Hope Movement did not join the list of 'All Together' coalition, which can be explained with the radical nationalist ideology of the party<sup>8</sup>; since the Hungarian Hope Movement is only willing to stand for the interests of the Hungarian minority, they did not want to cooperate with other national minorities. The campaign of the Hungarian Hope Movement was organized and realized with the active contribution of Jobbik, a radical nationalist party in the Hungarian parliament. Although the Movement did not win any mandates in the Provincial Assembly, the sheer capability to register an electoral list for the provincial elections should be regarded as a great achievement from such a young party as the Hungarian Hope Movement (it was founded in 2009).

Four mandates of the AVH in the provincial parliament were obtained from the electoral list, and the remaining three mandates were acquired by individual candidates in the municipalities of Szabadka (Subotica), Magyarkanizsa (Kanjiža), and Topolya (Bačka Topola). After the second round of the provincial elections it seemed that the AVH would have one more mandate in the Assembly, because László Kormányos won the second round in the municipality

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<sup>8</sup> Basically, it is only the Hungarian Hope Movement that can be differentiated on an ideological basis from the other Hungarian parties.

of Csóka (Čoka), however, the elections were run again due to the objections raised on the basis of electoral fraud, and in the new round Kormányos did not succeed to win the mandate.

The results of the local elections are just as important as the provincial elections concerning the representation of the interests of the Hungarian community in Serbia. Generally speaking, the popularity of the Democratic Party is still very high in the Province of Vojvodina, which is evident not only from the provincial but from the local results as well. The Democratic Party won a relative majority of votes in the local elections in the following municipalities (all of them having a great number of Hungarians): Szabadka (Subotica), Újvidék (Novi Sad), Ada (Ada), Óbecse (Bečej). The Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians obtained the majority of votes in the following municipalities (again, all of them dispose of a great number of Hungarians): Magyarkanizsa (Kanjiža), Zenta (Senta), Topolya (Bačka Topola), Csóka (Čoka), Kishegyes (Mali Iđoš). In no other municipalities of Vojvodina was the relative majority of votes obtained by any of the Hungarian parties.

In Subotica, the cultural, educational and political center of Vojvodina Hungarians, the Democratic Party obtained 26,67%, the AVH 22,52%, the Serbian Progressive Party 10,8%, several Serbian parties finished between 10 and 3 %, while the Hungarian Hope Movement won 1,64%, the DPVH 1,63%, and the 'All Together' coalition 0,76%. As the data show, none of the Hungarian parties could achieve significant support in Szabadka apart from the AVH; the other four Hungarian parties gained 1-2% lagging well behind Serbian (and Bunevac) parties. The situation is similar in other municipalities where the AVH seems to be the dominant Hungarian party: in Zenta, the AVH obtained the relative majority of votes, it was followed by Serbian parties, the Hungarian Civic Alliance won 8,77% arriving on the fourth place, while the other Hungarian parties only won 1-2%, which was, obviously, not enough to gain mandates in the municipal assembly.

The four smaller Hungarian parties, not surprisingly, were dissatisfied with the results, since there were only a few municipalities where they could perform better than the AVH. Even in Temerin, which is considered as the historical headquarter of the Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians (DPVH), the DPVH obtained the

same number of mandates as the AVH, and they received only 30 votes more than the AVH.

However, the performance of the Hungarian Hope Movement is worth mentioning. Seemingly, the HHM performed just as weakly as the other smaller Hungarian parties, but if we take into account that it was the first time the HHM has participated in elections (except for the 2010 elections of the Hungarian National Council), the results of this party are remarkable in some municipalities. In Subotica, for example, the Hungarian Hope Movement outperformed both the DFBVH and the 'All Together' coalition, and won one mandate in the assembly. In Óbecse, HHM landed in first place among the smaller Hungarian parties, overtaking both the DFBVH and the Hungarian Civic Alliance. In Magyarakanizsa, HHM was the only Hungarian party that could win a mandate apart from the AVH. Obviously, far-reaching conclusions cannot be deducted from only one performance, not only because we do not dispose of former results that could be compared with the ones of 2012, but also because the results of local elections do not necessarily show the real potential of a party. It is well-known that in the case of local elections, personal questions (that is, the personality of a candidate) do matter, sometimes even more than a party's ideology. Nevertheless, further performance of the Hungarian Hope Movement should be carefully followed, since it is not inconceivable that the party may spring up - at least in certain municipalities - as the only serious rival to the AVH.

When analyzing the results of the AVH in 2012 we cannot disregard the party's result in the previous elections. In 2008, the AVH, the DFBVH and the DFBVH registered a joint list named "Hungarian Coalition", and in the frame of which the 3 Hungarian parties were able to win a strong majority in most of the municipalities inhabited by large numbers of Hungarians. Compared to the results of the Hungarian Coalition in 2008, the performance of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians in 2012 shows an obvious decrease. This decrease can be partly explained with the fact that the votes of ethnic Hungarians were split between two or more Hungarian parties in 2012 (instead of the joint Hungarian list in 2008). However, if we calculate the sum of votes given to Hungarian parties in 2012, the negative tendency of votes for Hungarian parties is evident.

|                           | 2008<br>Hungarian<br>Coalition | 2012<br>AVH | 2012<br>DPVH | 2012<br>DPVH | 2012<br>HCA | 2012<br>HHM | 2012<br>Hungarian<br>parties<br>together | Notes  |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--|--|
| Ada (Ada)                 | 26,60%                         | 19,74%      |              | 3,21%        | 2,74%       | 1,15%       | 39,06%                                   | An independent Hungarian list won further 12,22% |
| Csóka (Čoka)              |                                | 30,74%      |              |              |             |             | 30,74%                                   |  |
| Kishegyes (Mali Idoš)     | 37,99%                         | 26,23%      |              |              |             |             | 26,23%                                   |  |
| Magyarkanizsa (Kanjiza)   | 52,27%                         | 32,59%      |              |              |             | 3,84%       | 36,43%                                   |  |
| Nagybecskerek (Zrenjanin) | 3,18%                          | 3,31%       |              |              |             |             | 3,31%                                    |  |
| Óbecse (Bečej)            | 30,28%                         | 15,94%      | 2,44%        | 1,58%        | 1%          | 1,80%       | 21,76%                                   |  |
| Szabadka (Subotica)       | 27,42%                         | 22,52%      |              | 1,63%        |             | 1,64%       | 26,55%                                   | 'All Together' list: 0,76%                       |
| Temerin (Temerin)         | 22,30%                         |             |              |              |             |             |  |  |
| Topolya (Bačka Topola)    | 47,32%                         | 29,60%      | 3,47%        |              |             |             | 39,45%                                   | An independent Hungarian list won further 6,38%  |
| Zenta (Senta)             | 33,40%                         | 35,10%      |              | 2,31%        | 9,33%       | 2,01%       | 48,75%                                   |  |

Comparative results of 2008 and 2012 (based on %)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The comparative tables are based on the results published on the website of CeSid (<http://direktorijum.cesid.org/Izbori.aspx?godina=2008&izbori=Lokalni%202008> and <http://cesid.org/lt/articles/rezultati-izbora-2012/>)

|                           | 2008<br>Hungarian<br>Coalition | 2012<br>AVH | 2012<br>DPVH | 2012<br>DFVH | 2012<br>HCA | 2012<br>HHM | 2012<br>Hungarian<br>parties<br>together | Notes  |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--|--|
| Ada (Ada)                 | 2703                           | 1767        |              | 288          | 246         | 103         | 3498                                     | An independent Hungarian list won further 1094 votes |
| Csóka (Čoka)              |                                | 1829        |              |              |             |             | 1829                                     |  |
| Kishegyes (Mali Idoš)     | 2367                           | 1616        |              |              |             |             | 1616                                     |  |
| Magyarkanizsa (Kanjiža)   | 7913                           | 4172        |              |              |             | 491         | 4663                                     |  |
| Nagybecskerek (Zrenjanin) | 2087                           | 1986        |              |              |             |             | 1986                                     |  |
| Óbecse (Bečej)            | 6366                           | 3049        | 467          | 302          | 191         | 345         | 4354                                     |  |
| Szabadka (Subotica)       | 22300                          | 15914       |              | 1149         |             | 1157        | 18760                                    | 'All Together' list: 540                             |
| Temerin (Temerin)         | 3540                           | 1164        | 1197         |              |             |             | 2361                                     |  |
| Topolya (Bačka Topola)    | 9247                           | 5324        | 625          |              |             |             | 7097                                     | An independent Hungarian list won further 1148 votes |
| Zenta (Senta)             | 4444                           | 3828        |              | 252          | 1018        | 220         | 5318                                     |  |

Comparative results of 2008 and 2012 (based on the number of votes)

|                           | 2008<br>Hungarian<br>Coalition | 2012<br>AVH | 2012<br>DPVH | 2012<br>DFVH | 2012<br>HCA | 2012<br>HHM | Notes   |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|---|
| Ada (Ada)                 | 9                              | 6           |              | 1            |             |             | An independent Hungarian list won further 4 mandates      |
| Csóka (Ćoka)              | 8                              | 9           |              |              |             |             |   |
| Kishegyes (Mali Idoš)     | 12                             | 8           |              |              |             |             |   |
| Magyarkanizsa (Kanjiza)   | 19                             | 11          |              |              |             | 1           |   |
| Nagybecskerek (Zrenjanin) | 2                              | 3           |              |              |             |             |   |
| Óbecse (Bečej)            | 13                             | 8           | 1            |              |             |             |   |
| Szabadka (Subotica)       | 21                             | 16          |              | 1            |             | 1           |   |
| Temerin (Temerin)         | 8                              | 3           | 3            | na.          | na.         | na.         |   |
| Topolya (Bačka Topola)    | 22                             | 16          |              |              |             |             | An independent Hungarian list won further 3 mandates      |
| Zenta (Senta)             | 12                             | 12          |              |              | 3           |             | The Hungarian Civic Alliance (HCA) won 4 mandates in 2008 |

Comparative results of 2008 and 2012 (based on the number of mandates)

The tables show that the AVH performed worse in 2012 than the Hungarian Coalition in 2008 in the municipalities of Kishegyes, Magyarkanizsa, Óbecse, Szabadka, and Topolya, and the number of mandates won by Hungarian candidates shows a declining tendency as well. It is partially due to the large proportion of Hungarian votes given to Serbian parties, and partially to demographic reasons, that is, the continuous decrease of the Hungarian population in Vojvodina. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the Democratic Party disposed of many ethnic Hungarian candidates in the municipalities of Vojvodina (for example, in Zenta, out of 10 representatives of the Democratic Party 6 are ethnic Hungarians). The Democratic Party and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians formed a coalition<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> In some places, the AVH-DP coalition was strengthened with other parties.

in many municipalities, including Szabadka, Csóka, Topolya, or Magyarkanizsa.

The analysis of the performance of Hungarian parties in the 2012 local elections can be concluded with the following remarks. The asymmetry in the popularity of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians versus the smaller Hungarian parties has been confirmed with the 2012 elections; the AVH is still the only Hungarian party that is able to win mandates at every level (parliamentary, provincial, local) of the Serbian elections, and the four remaining Hungarian parties are forced back into certain municipal assemblies. Ethnic Hungarians in Serbia have tended to vote for Serbian parties for a long time; this phenomenon was perceptible in 2012 as well.

Since the Democratic Party, long-standing ally of AVH was not invited into the Belgrade coalition government, and therefore the AVH refused to participate in the coalition as well, we can assume that the new government term will be less productive in terms of minority- and human rights improvements than the former one was. Nevertheless, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, having 5 representatives in the Belgrade parliament, may well exploit the opportunities hidden in the status of “constructive opposition”.



# Education



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*Attila Z. Papp*

## **Motivations for school choice and minority perspectives<sup>1</sup>**

### **Motivations for school choice and minority perspectives**

The study focuses on general economic and sociological school choice models, and tries to analyse to what extent these models can be applied to the understanding of the school choice of Hungarian minority students. The author argues that in the case of minority language education, not only the community aspects are important but the so-called equity movements as well. Because of the limited nature of human resources among any kind of minority, minority language education should deal with minority students of different family backgrounds, otherwise the process of assimilation among members of the minority group will accelerate. The second part of the study analyzes the motivations for minority school choice at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels, and the author emphasizes that school choice is in fact the result of the interplay of motivations on different levels.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the written version of the presentation (entitled School choice "strategies") given at the conference organized by the National Policy Research Institute of Budapest on 18 July 2012. While writing this paper, the author benefitted from the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Currently the author is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Minority Studies, Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The studies of the present thematic block were prepared in the framework of research entitled "School choices of the majority and the minority living in diaspora" supported by the Scholarship Programme for Hungarian Science Abroad of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The research was directed by Barna Bodó; the special adviser of the research was Attila Papp Z. Further participants included Viktória Ferenc, Magdolna Séra, Éva Szügyi, János Márton, Tünde Morvai, and László Szarka.

## 1. Introduction: the macro-level models of school choice and minority perspectives

### 1.1. Macro-level models

The transition from kindergarten to elementary school is of key importance from the perspective of children as well as individual parental decisions making. At the same time, this choice also has social, public welfare, and economic relevance. From a minority perspective, these decisions involve further special considerations.

First of all, the significance of school choice can be examined in a simplified economic (market-oriented) model. According to this model, education is interpreted in the framework of job market relevance and usefulness: the success of school choice is determined by future job opportunities and vice versa: job market demands shape schooling strategies. In this relation, a good individual/parental decision is the one that puts children on an educational path that will guarantee their success in the job market. While the latter consideration may arise when first choosing a school, all that parents can base their decisions on are mere assumptions. In many cases, the functioning of schools is not transparent, and all that parents can formulate about the future educational path of their children are suppositions. In other words, schools resemble a "black box" whose input parameters are – supposedly – known, but whose output remains uncertain while students complete the various levels of education. Moreover, there is a continuous structural distortion between the education and the job market: while the "production time" of the educational system is 10-20 years, labour demands change much more dynamically. This also shows the impossibility of establishing a direct correspondence between schools and the labour market. It is no wonder that in international circles, it has been demonstrated<sup>2</sup> today that on top of fundamental knowledge, education should rather pass on competences that will enable future job seekers to pursue their training continuously and be able to renew their opportunities.

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<sup>2</sup> OECD (2010): *Pathways to Success. How knowledge and skills at age 15 shape future lives in Canada*. Download: <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/pisa2006/44574748.pdf>

Thus, according to this economic model, school choice affects the economic performance of a country. Eventually, the output of education exerts an indirect influence on the GDP of the country, which also means that less talented students and drop-outs are more likely to become unemployed (which in turn affects the access to social benefits and economic opportunities).

In this economic (market-oriented) model, the person making a choice about schooling is visualized as a rational actor striving for cost effectiveness who is faced with the following essential question: which school is the most efficient from the perspective of future returns? In everyday life, this question may raise a number of issues for the parents. Which school should they enrol their children in? Which school type is better: state schools or private schools?<sup>3</sup> State schools or religious schools? Which school has a better performance?<sup>4</sup> Naturally, no universal answers exist for these questions. The relation of educational performance and school types must be examined on the national, regional and local levels. At the same time, the types of information available with respect to the various institutions and the extent of their availability for the public is still an additional consideration.

The sociological-pedagogical model of schooling leads to the question of equity. Along the lines of this logic, the act of choosing a school lose its significance, because every school is equally prepared to admit children coming from the social backgrounds that exist in its district or vicinity. Therefore, parents do not have to make a choice, and schools do not select future students. In theory they are prepared to accept any kind of students. On this view, schools strive to produce

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that more recent analyses distinguish between state-dependent private schools and completely autonomous private institutions. More than 50 per cent of the budget of the former is provided by state funding, while this value is less than 50 per cent in the case of the latter. Musset, P. (2012), "School Choice and Equity: Current Policies in OECD Countries and a Literature Review", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 66, OECD Publishing. Download: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k9fq23507vc-en>

<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that these questions are relevant both in general and in a minority context. For instance, there are private schools in Slovakia, church high schools are considered to be elite institutions in Transcarpathia, and church schools have greater prestige in Transylvania as well. Whether the competence level of the students attending these schools actually confirm the higher prestige assumed is a question unanswered.

pedagogical value added; that is, they try to develop the performance of children in comparison to themselves (instead of adjusting it to a pre-determined level that is obviously unattainable for some). Naturally, the event of school choice is present in this case as well, since in practice, there are no two identical institutions. Individuals may decide what educational and (consequently) career path they would like to follow, but the structural obligation that is crucial in the market-oriented model is not present here.

In the economic (market-oriented) model based on selection at all levels, there is a great probability that based on the parental background, the educational paths of a cohort diverge right at the beginning of the school selection period. On the other hand, the lack of structural obligation implies equity as well as the freedom of individuals to choose their paths.

*"Educational equity refers to an educational and learning environment in which individuals can consider options and make choices throughout their lives based on their abilities and talents, and not on the basis of stereotypes, biased expectations or discrimination. The achievement of educational equity enables females and males of all races and ethnic backgrounds to develop skills needed to be productive, empowered citizens. It opens economic and social opportunities regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or social status."*<sup>5</sup>

In this sociological model of school choice, we, once again, run into the notion of assessment: pedagogical value added – regardless of its definition<sup>6</sup> – has to be based on some kind of (external/internal, input/output) measurement. In order for the stakeholders of education to guarantee and/or accept the value added of schooling, there have to be (standardized) tools for measuring school performance and publicly available channels for publishing the results of measurement.

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<sup>5</sup> Definition from a 1997 report of the OECD. Cited by Radó, Péter: *Méltányosság az oktatásban. Két jelentés az oktatás méltányosságáról*. OKM Budapest, 2007. 12.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. OECD 2008: *Measuring improvements in learning outcomes: best practices to assess the value added of schools. Best Practices to Assess the Value-Added of Schools*

The market-oriented and sociological models of school choice are considered to be ideal-typical descriptions, but in practice, there are a multitude of mixed models. Both models have advantages and drawbacks. Those arguing for the market-oriented model claim that the competition between schools contributes to the increase of performance, while its opponents regard it as a potential seed-plot of segregation and the reinforcement of the polarization of the system, since choosing between different schools is more available for middle-class families than for others. The principle of equity supports the sociological model, but the critics of the latter emphasize that limiting people's choices may infringe human rights and it does not necessarily enhance the performance of schools.

A recent analysis takes inventory of the school choice related policies of the OECD countries, and it states among others that the debates surrounding these choices contain a lot of ideological posturing, and rely on empirical data only to a limited extent.<sup>7</sup> Arguments in favour of school choice usually draw on three premisses: a. the introduction of market mechanisms into education increases efficiency; b. from an individualistic and liberal point of view, school choice is a parental right; c. school choice is a way to introduce more equity into the educational system. Therefore, the school choice can be examined from several perspectives, and different expectations can be set up: it should be a tool that ensures the diversity and efficiency of schools, but it should also make it possible for parents to select the school they consider the "best" for their children, while the educational system should also provide equal opportunities for the most disadvantaged groups of society.

### *1.2. The minority perspectives of school choice*

The question I am interested in is how these considerations can be interpreted and applied with respect to the school choice of the Hungarian ethnic minority living in the Carpathian Basin. If, by somewhat simplifying the situation, we classify ethnic Hungarians living abroad into cluster (local majority) regions and dispersed population in (scattered regions), it seems evident that in the cluster regions, both market-oriented and sociological models may play a role

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<sup>7</sup> Musset 2012..

while in the dispersed areas, considerations related to the language of education will be more manifest.

However, in order to understand minority school choice, one needs to make it clear that besides the labour market considerations typical in any system of education, the schooling of minority ethnic Hungarians has two unique elements: a community and an equity feature. The *community element* of minority education in the mother tongue<sup>8</sup> means that education in the mother tongue is carried out in an institutional framework that serves the long-term survival of the minority community. The mere existence of education in the mother tongue is the guarantee of community survival, and this fact is accepted by the stakeholders (the majority of minority politicians, experts, parents, and learners) more or less consciously. Seen in this light, minority school choice is of great importance, since where there are not only different institutions, but institutions of different languages in the local educational market, opting for non-mother tongue educational institution leads to the 'self-extinction' and assimilation of the minority.

At the same time, minority education has another element that is less elaborated on: the so-called *equity element*. This equity dimension can be included in the above mentioned sociological-pedagogical model, and it implies that the schooling of all the members of the minority is assured. That statement is valid on a "minority-free" social level as well, but in a minority context, it has an increased relevance because the human resources of a minority group are inevitably more limited than those of an entire state or society. Commitment for education in the mother-tongue in an interethnic environment goes hand in hand with a limited range of educational options, which, from the perspective of the school, puts equity even more into focus. Since a school or class in the minority mother tongue can select students to a much lesser extent than a majority school, greater emphasis has to be laid on the improvement of learners with respect to their own achievements. Generally speaking, a minority school cannot afford to let certain students lag behind in the same way as a

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<sup>8</sup> Our present considerations regard minority education in the mother tongue. The notion of minority education is much broader than that. See Papp Z., Attila: *Kisebbségi magyarok oktatási részvételének értelmezési lehetőségei*. EDUCATIO 2012/1 3-23.

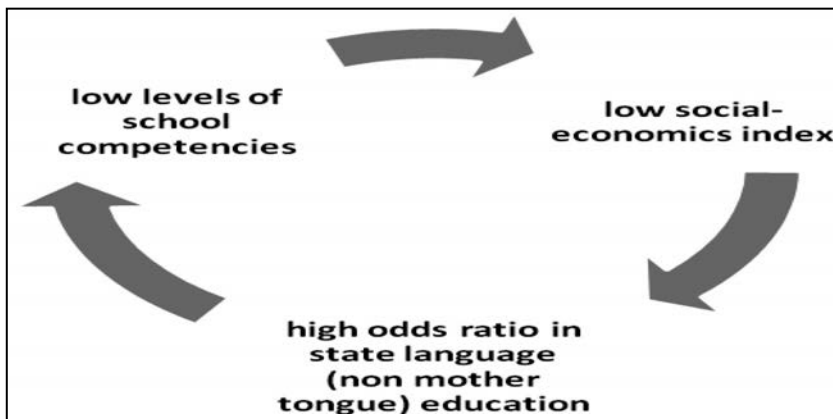


minority community cannot allow itself to give up any of its elements and social subgroups.

If the operators of minority education leave certain children behind, they not only increase the group of the potentially unemployed (according to the economic/market-oriented model), but they also reinforce the creation or re-creation of a social strata that will be even less mother-tongue conscious when choosing a school for their own children in the future. Based on census data, I have already shown<sup>9</sup> that some minority groups tend to become hollow from the bottom. In other words, the smaller the minority, the higher the number of people with higher education. Those people who have a lower socio-economic index seem to be more likely to leave the community; that is, they choose to follow the assimilation path sooner than the members of the minority intelligentsia.

### Graph 1.

#### *Assimilation spiral*



Source: Papp 2012a<sup>10</sup>

In light of the Romanian and Serbian PISA-findings, the picture can be further refined by demonstrating that those who are not educated in their mother tongue usually have a lower family back-

<sup>9</sup> Papp, Z. Attila : *Itt és ott: iskolai integrációs kihívások a magyarországi kisebbségi és a határon túli magyar oktatásban*. REGIO 2010/4. 73-108.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.mnt.org.rs/container/container\\_attachments/download/491](http://www.mnt.org.rs/container/container_attachments/download/491)

ground indicator and also, a significantly poorer school performance than those who study in their mother tongue. One can say that an assimilation spiral is created here: due to non-mother-tongue education, the number of those with lower competences expands, and the latter fact increases the chance of their having lower socio-economic indicators. Meanwhile, the low family background indicator produces less conscious parents with respect to choosing a mother-tongue school, which in turn reproduces the decision in favour of non-mother-tongue education (see *Graph 1*). All of the above is, of course, reinforced by the language shift processes within interethnic marriages and generations.

The school choices of ethnic Hungarians living outside Hungary follow two significant educational paths. One of them could be called the ethnic (mother tongue) educational path, and it designates the case when transitions between the levels of education show a continuous preference for education in Hungarian. The other extreme is the above mentioned case leading to potential assimilation when going towards higher educational levels, ethnic Hungarians opt for non-mother-tongue education.<sup>11</sup> In the course of the schooling of ethnic Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin, but outside Hungary, the fight for the institutionalization of these two opposing educational paths characterizes the bulk of minority political activities, because at stake is the survival of ethnic Hungarians as a community.

When thinking about minority school choice in terms of educational paths, we have to start from the lowest schooling level and draw attention to the importance of kindergartens. Statistics reveal that attending a mother-tongue kindergarten increases the chances of going to a Hungarian school. Although occasionally, there are parents who, after enrolling their children in a non-mother-tongue kindergarten to facilitate the acquisition of the national language, still return to education in their mother tongue, such cases are few and far between. Among language shifters what happens more frequently is that those who attend a Hungarian mother-tongue kindergarten and lower elementary do not pursue their studies in Hungarian on the higher levels of education. This also calls attention to the fact that in a minority context, the transitions between the educational

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<sup>11</sup> For further details on the subject, see *Papp 2012 i. m.*

levels may imply a potential language shift, which is usually accompanied by a negative, assimilationist perspective to be avoided on a community level.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding kindergartens, it is important to note that out of the five reference values of the strategic framework for *Education and Training 2020*<sup>13</sup> of the European Council, one pertains to kindergarten education. The document states that "by 2020, at least 95% of children between 4 years old and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education." This means that the member states and candidates of the European Union should set as a goal to involve nearly all children of kindergarten age in kindergarten education because that is the key to their eventual success in school, especially – as stated by the document – with regards to the those coming from a disadvantaged background. With respect to the ethnic Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin, this argumentation raises at least three major issues:

1. Can the Hungarian-language kindergarten subsystem and the enrolment ratio of their countries concerned differ from the respective national trends?
2. Can we define the notion of disadvantaged backgrounds in terms of language? If the answer is yes, mother-tongue and/or efficient bilingual kindergarten education should receive extensive support, especially in regions with dispersed minority populations.
3. Interpreting the notion of disadvantaged backgrounds in social terms leads to the integration of Romas with Hungarian ethnic ties into Hungarian-language kindergarten education. The question in this regard is whether or not the regional and local (teacher) communities are open to and prepared for that?

In Western European countries that perform well in terms of school competencies, the European indicator regarding childhood education usually has a high value. (*Figure 2*). If one examine the same indicator in our region (*Figure 3*), one can see that Hungary has

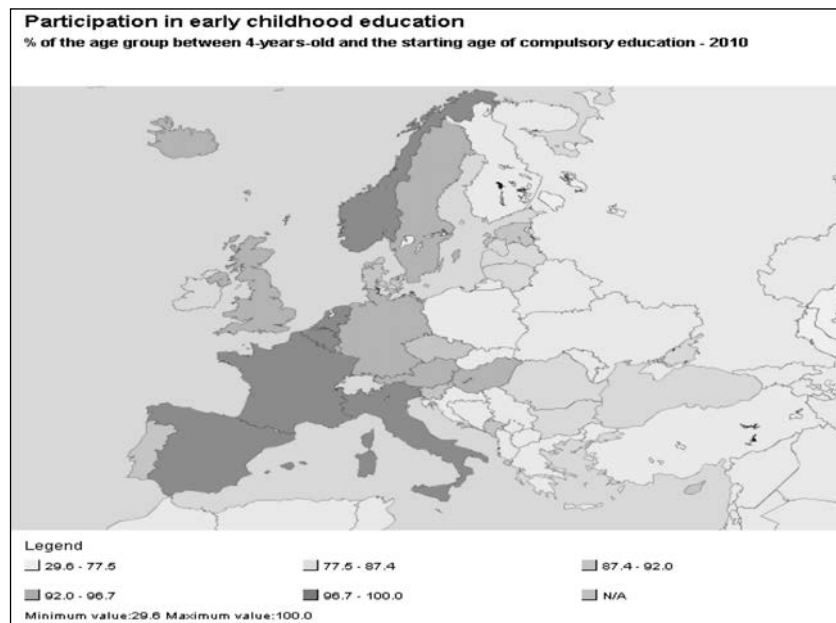
<sup>12</sup> The only exception to that is probably the transition from (Hungarian) secondary and (national language) higher education, for it may occur that the professional preference may not exist in the mother tongue, therefore minority students are forced to change their language of education due to structural reasons.

<sup>13</sup> See the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 (2009/C 119/02). <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:119:0002:0010:en:PDF>

basically reached the benchmark value with an above average figure, whereas the averages of Austria and Slovenia are in correlation with the European Union. Although showing continuous improvement, Romania and Slovakia, containing the two most numerous Hungarian communities of the Carpathian Basin, have remained far below the EU average and the benchmark value. However, it also follows from that that in these countries, one can expect the further extension of kindergarten and/or pre-school institutional networks, and with due attention, all of that might entail the reinforcement of Hungarian language enrolment.

**Figure 2.**

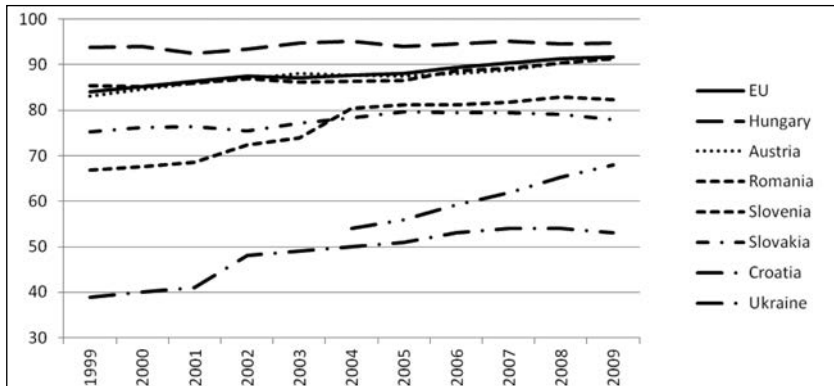
*Participation in early childhood education (EU, 2010)*



Source: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/web/\\_svg/Eurostat\\_Map\\_tps00179\\_04091721453\\_download\\_tmp\\_embed.png](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/web/_svg/Eurostat_Map_tps00179_04091721453_download_tmp_embed.png)

**Figure 3.**

*Chronological participation in early childhood education in the EU, Hungary, and some neighbouring countries (%)*



Source: EUROSTAT, Ukraine: <http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/>

As Figure 3 shows kindergarten enrollment is quite low in Croatia (68 percent in 2009), but it is even lower in the Ukraine and within that, in Transcarpathia where only 42 percent of kindergarten-age children attended kindergarten in 2010. In the villages (where about two thirds of Transcarpathian ethnic Hungarians live), the situation is even worse: this figure is only 34 percent.<sup>14</sup> It should be noted, however, that from 2011, the Ukraine has introduced obligatory pre-school education, so this indicator is expected to improve in the near future.

Thus, the importance of kindergarten education lies in the fact that in the case of ethnic minorities, it can be regarded as the foundation of schooling in the mother tongue.

## 2. Minority educational paths from the perspective of educational statistics

It is a recurring professional challenge that the educational data concerning ethnic Hungarian learners are not easily retrievable in any of the neighbouring countries. While participation in mother-

<sup>14</sup> The Statistical Yearbook of Transcarpathia 2011 (*Statizticsnij Scsoricsnik Zakarpattya*) 449-451.

tongue education is relatively easily traceable, (see *Table 1*), one of the most relevant pieces of information regarding school choice (namely, whether ethnic Hungarians participate in mother-tongue or national-language education) is not nearly as up-to-date and registered in detail in official records in all the countries of concern for us. It is probably in Slovakia that we have the most detailed information in official statistics<sup>15</sup> which involve the language of education and the ethnicity of students as well. Nonetheless, we have various estimates about three major regions (see *Figure 4*), and on the basis of them, we can say that about 20 percent of elementary school learners do not study in their mother tongue, and this proportion grows as we move to higher levels of education. It can also be stated that among Slovakia's ethnic Hungarians the ratio is the highest of those opting for secondary-level non-mother-tongue education.

**Table 1.**

*The number of learners studying in Hungarian in some neighbouring countries by level of education*

|                        | Number of children in kindergarten | Number of students in elementary school | Number of students in secondary school | Number of students in higher education* |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
|                        | ISCED 0                            | ISCED 1, 2                              | ISCED 3                                | ISCED 5,6                               |
| Slovakia 2010/11       | 9 836                              | 34 664                                  | 17 417                                 | 6 133                                   |
| Romania 2010/11        | 42 747                             | 90 779                                  | 37 192                                 | 40 000**                                |
| Serbia 2010/11         | 4 448                              | 15 810                                  | 6 754                                  | 3 758                                   |
| Transcarpathia 2008/09 | 2 522                              | 14 290                                  | 2 117                                  | 1 923                                   |

\* Data regarding higher education contain the data of those of Hungarian ethnicity and are valid for the academic year of 2009/2010, with the exception of Transcarpathia. The Transcarpathian data is based on the academic year of 2006/2007.

\*\* Estimation.

Sources:

Romania – [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro), Ministry of Education;

Slovakia: <http://www.uips.sk/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka>

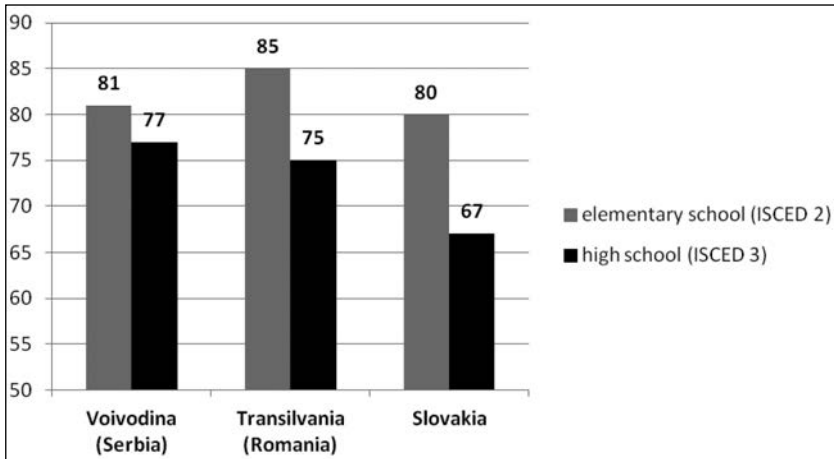
Voivodina: Hungarian National Council of Voivodina

Transcarpathia: KÖTÉL, Emőke (ed.): *Kataszter. Kárpátalja*. Balassi Intézet, MÁSZ, Budapest, 2011; Educational Committee of the County Council.

<sup>15</sup> See data available on [www.uips.sk](http://www.uips.sk)

**Figure 4.**

*Participation rate of ethnic Hungarian students in mother-tongue education by level of education*



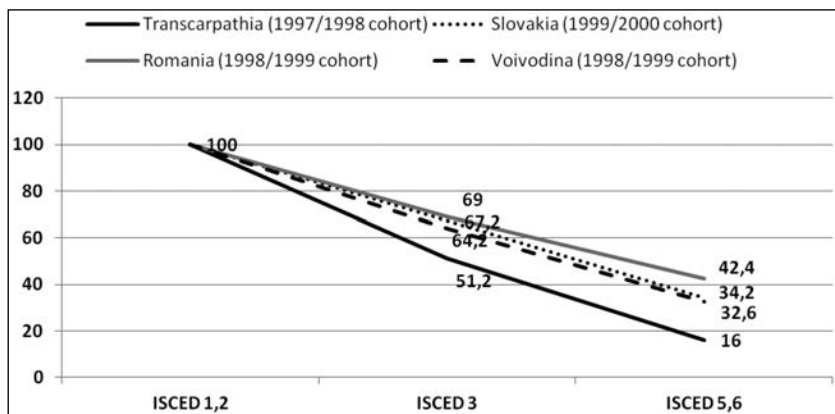
If one interprets the figures of mother-tongue enrolment of educational paths, one can also examine what percentage of students of the same cohort, starting their educational career in Hungarian, go into higher education in their mother tongue in their homeland. In other words, one can calculate that at a given time, what percentage of students enrolling in first grade will continue their studies (after secondary school) in their mother tongue at the university or college level. Based on the estimated data at our disposal<sup>16</sup>, one can see (from *Figure 5*) that Romania's ethnic Hungarians and Transcarpathian ethnic Hungarians are at the two extremes of the scale. According to the Transylvanian data, about 40 percent of the cohort can be absorbed eventually by the Hungarian-language higher educational system of their homeland. At the same time, one also knows from data not specified here that this minority mother-tongue educational path grew wider after the revolution of 1989, in which the expansion of mother-tongue higher education played a significant role. At the other extreme, one can find the ethnic Hungarians of Transcarpathia, where the dropout rate within the system is extremely high, and it

<sup>16</sup> Although the data are based on official statistics, the estimates also involve those who did not enter higher education right after completing their secondary education.

has been made even worse by the introduction of the new system of school completion exams in recent years. It is easy to point out that the internal dropout tendency in Transcarpathia is most likely related to the fact that the ratio of kindergarten education is also the lowest in this region. Besides the above mentioned factors, there are probably other system-level reasons for the high dropout rate such as the methodological skills and training of teachers, and the high proportion of social disadvantaged Hungarian mother-tongue Romas on the lower levels of education.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 5.**

*Minority educational paths in the homeland*



Sources: Papp 2012

To sum up the educational statistics data of the past two decades, one can identify two seemingly contradictory trends regarding ethnic Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin. On the one hand, as a result of the demographic decrease, the school age population shrank in every region. However, parallel to that, mother-tongue secondary and higher education rates based on enrolment in Hungarian-language schools shows a growing tendency. In a certain sense, one can be a witness to the saturation of the mother-tongue educational

<sup>17</sup> For instance, in the academic year of 2010/2011, there were more than 2,000 Romas of Hungarian mother tongue in Hungarian schools, which is about 17-20 percent of learners studying in Hungarian.



system, but that does not mean that the enrolment ratio should drop at the respective levels. There are reserves within the system that could be exploited by increasing the autonomy and appeal of schools, by giving methodological support to teachers to enhance their creativity, and by operating quality assurance systems committed to watch over the everyday activities of schools.

### **3. Creating a taxonomy of the motivations of school choice**

Since school choice can be motivated by a number of factors, it is difficult to treat this area as a unified whole. At the same time, research conducted at different sites and in environments diverse from a minority perspective (in cluster and dispersion) shows several similarities.<sup>18</sup> Factors underlying the choice of schools can be grouped in several different ways. From a pragmatic point of view, one can distinguish between symbolic (transfer of language and culture) and rational motivations (the qualities of a school). Adopting an interethnic approach, one can differentiate between the specific motivations of those living in a dispersed settlements and in a clustered settlement, while if one considers the actual decision maker, one can draw the line between the decisions of parents, students or teachers and other specialists.

In order to preserve the characteristics of these diverse typologies while organizing diverging motivations into some sort of a system, I will now turn to the analytical schemes used for explaining the specificities of minority education.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, the motivations of school choice should be taken into consideration on macro, mezzo and micro-level on the one hand, and on the other, a distinction should be made between factors related to minority education directly and indirectly. (*Table 2*) The macro level refers to the motivations of school choice related to the whole educational system, whereas the micro-level indicates the motivations underlying individual decisions.

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<sup>18</sup> See other research papers in this number. (ed.)

<sup>19</sup> See Papp 2012

**Table 2.***Factors influencing school choice*

|                             | Macro  | Mezzo  | Micro   |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---|
| <b>Ethnically neutral</b>   | Legal background:<br>Free school choice vs. school districts<br>Who is the school's proprietor? (Who is the maintainer?)<br>Accountability and autonomy of schools<br>Characteristics of school structure<br>horizontal and vertical inclusion<br>Characteristics of the settlement<br>village, town, city | Question of "quality" (competence of teachers, after-school activities, alternative programmes: step-by-step, art class) BUT: what about quality?<br>Local prestige of school - "small town elitism"<br>Vicinity of school<br>Equipment of school<br>Recruitment, self-marketing | Socio-economic background of family and its impact on schooling (PISA)<br>Family pattern/tradition<br>At higher levels: child's decision<br>Peer group pressure, kindergarten social networks<br>Informal channels of communication |
| <b>Related to ethnicity</b> | The prestige of the Hungarian language<br>Normative financing – extra financing of minority schools<br>Ethnic ratio of settlement<br>Educational support   | Ratio of Romas ("white flight" phenomenon)   | Interethnic marriages<br>Linguistic strategies of family (majority national language, career paths)   |

*a. Macro-level factors*

The predominant factor determining school choice is the legal environment. In other terms, the area of school choice as such depends on whether legal regulations allow for freedom of choice or not. If they did not, the whole issue would become meaningless. Only in a hypothetical situation with the introduction of rigorous district boundaries, would parents who are better off still have their choice, even if at the price of moving (to another district). However, there are most likely other legal loopholes as well, if different in every country, which make choice possible without the obligation of moving.

Although there are school districts in each of the countries examined, when it comes to the issue of minorities, parents so-inclined have no difficulty in crossing them both officially and with the help of loopholes.

Another group of macro-level motivations derived from the legal environment can be generated by the maintainer of the school. The choice is, of course, more acute in places where there are schools

maintained by different entities (hence, their presumed or real differences in prestige). In our region, the maintainer is most frequently the local government or the state, but there also exist some institutions founded by private entities or churches. Private schools are usually seen as an alternative to state-run schools and also as innovative and autonomous institutions, and as such, they are often have higher prestige. To translate it into OECD terminology, it is important to mention that private schools in the Carpathian Basin are in fact state-dependent private establishments, since their functioning is supported by state subsidies or quotas.

The question of the school owner or maintainer is relevant not only from a legal aspect, but also because it is strongly related to the accountability of schools. Schools are not islands, for they depend on their socio-economic environment, and they can also contribute to the evolution of social relations and the enhancement of equity.<sup>20</sup> If schools really belong to the community, they would have to pulsate to the same rhythm as the local milieu, and they could fulfill important community functions, especially in small settlements and in the dispersed settlements. The accountability of schools is not only an administrative and economic issue but a professional and pedagogical challenge as well. If the performance of schools can be measured uniformly by tools approved by the mutual consent of the stakeholders, accountability could rest on professional grounds (such as achievements on competence tests, higher education ratios, pedagogical value added, level of satisfaction and so on).

Accountability and school autonomy are, in fact, complementary notions. The greater autonomy a school has, the greater financial and professional accountability should be assigned to it. Although autonomy means freedom in matters of finance, pedagogy, and human resources management, in exchange, the institutions should be held accountable for their level of performance. Nonetheless, on the basis of international experience, it can be stated that it is autonomy in human resource management (as opposed to finance) that contributes the most significantly to boosting school performance.<sup>21</sup>

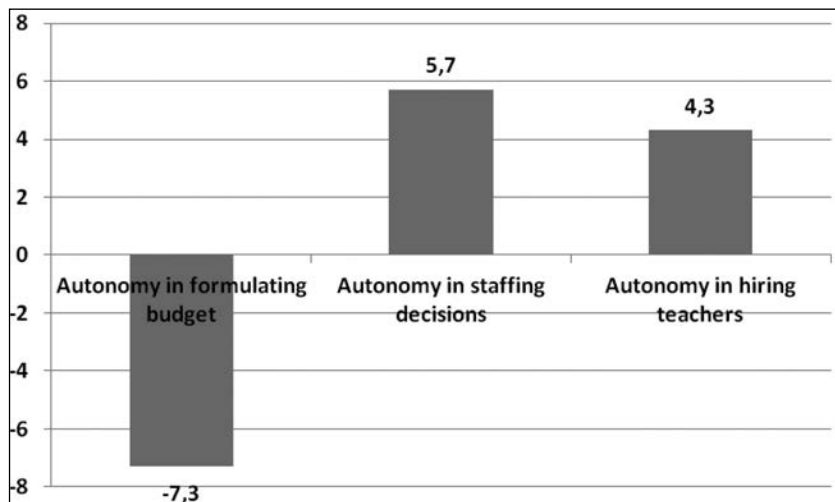
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<sup>20</sup> *Equity of the European Educational Systems. A set of indicators.* European Commission Project Socrates SO2-6IOBGE. 113.

<sup>21</sup> Ludger Wößmann, Elke Lüdemann, Gabriela Schütz, Martin R. West: *School Accountability, Autonomy, Choice, and the Level of Student Achievement: International Evidence from PISA 2003.* OECD, 2007.

**Figure 6.**

*Relationship between different types of school autonomy and school performance (B-coefficients, regression model, significant effects at level: 0.01)*



Source: OECD 2007. 36.

With the help of the international PISA surveys, we can get an idea about the extent of differentiation of schools by ability and family background, or the rate of the so-called vertical and horizontal inclusion. The *vertical (academic) inclusion* indicator refers to the separation of educational paths and the school arrangement of learners by their abilities, while the *horizontal (social) inclusion* indicator shows the extent of coeducation by family background on the various levels of education.

In the OECD countries, there is a strong and significant correlation between the two types of inclusion ( $r=0,68$ ),<sup>22</sup> which means that early school (type) choice goes hand in hand with the selection of the social environment of the school. If schools are homogenous on the inside and there are great differences between the various schools, it is obviously not indifferent to parents which school their children attend. As the saying goes, choosing a school also means choosing a social class. If schools are heterogeneous on the inside, and they reflect social diversity, there will not be significant differ-

<sup>22</sup> Own calculations based on the figures of PISA 2009 Table II.5.1 and Table II.5.2

ences between schools, and in theory, it makes no difference which school a child goes to. These choices would not pose a problem in themselves, since the characteristics of a school system are inevitably affected by the traditions and legal framework of a country and many other factors. However, the PISA results also reveal that (in OECD countries), both high-level inclusion indicators significantly correlate with the increase of competence achievements.<sup>23</sup>

Another important pillar of school choice is whether strictly speaking, there is a real choice even if the legal framework allows for it. To put it differently, one can make a choice when there are several schools of similar educational status. This seemingly banal idea leads us to the consideration of the specificities of settlements, and obviously, a distinction should be made between the narrow and broad range of school choice options in villages and towns, respectively. (For this very reason, we looked into cases for both settlement types in our research.)

On the macro level, some factors that are more clearly determined ethnicity-wise is the prestige of Hungarian and that of the majority national language, the ethnic quota used in financing and the ethnic ratio of the settlements. The prestige of Hungarian is determined, among others, by the current economic and political status of Hungary: if the mother country is appealing, so is the Hungarian language, and not only for the members of the Hungarian minority, but for the majority as well. The prestige of the language can affect the school choice of parents and children.

The quota used in financing indicates that minority education receives more subsidy from the state (e.g. in Romania). This could be considered as equitable, but it is questionable whether this principle should be or could be also applied in a local majority clusters situation, in the same way as in the dispersed settlements. Theoretically, this financing also helps to make schools more "minority friendly", and it can promote the recruitment of minority learners of schools.

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<sup>23</sup> The Pearson correlation coefficient with the horizontal and the academic indicators and the reading comprehension competence levels: 0.61 and 0.45 (sign.: 0,000, respectively). These correlations are lower and insignificant in non-OECD countries. It is also important to know that the OECD countries perform significantly better than the partner countries participating in the PISA survey.

It is another matter whether the institutions take advantage of this opportunity or not.

The ethnic ratio of the settlements has an impact on the language of education in schools, and among others, school choice also means language choice for parents. From the perspective of parents, language choice is based on the prestige of languages and the (true or false) assumptions that one language can assure a more successful career path for their children. The decision for non-mother-tongue education is made on an individual level, but as it reinforces the assimilation processes, its impact will be exerted on the macro level of the community as well (see *Figure 1*).

*b. Mezzo-level institutional factors*

Factors on the mezzo level include features that are closely related to the external and internal life of schools. Undoubtedly if we take the event of choosing as our point of reference, the school selected must have some sort of a *differentia specifica*; that is, it must have certain characteristics that influence the decision. The most obvious factor is physical closeness: the school should be easy to reach (by bus or other parental investment). Going beyond that, the material state and infrastructure of the school building also constitute an asset. Another factor that often emerged in the interviews conducted during the research was the existence of "high standards". Naturally, it is to be determined what parents or children mean by high standards. One of its components is, of course, the rate of learners going into further education, and another one is the competence of the teachers working in the school. The smaller a settlement, the more information circulates on the local grapevine about the teachers working in the school: we could say that the social visibility of teachers is greater here. In bigger settlements, schools have to sell themselves for the outer world in order to attract children.

It should be noted that in scholarly literature, a difference is made between high standards and quality.<sup>24</sup> While high standards refer to an external performance, the paradigm of quality is based

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<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Dr. Setényi, János: *A minőség kora*, Raabe, Budapest, 1999; Mandel, Kinga – Papp Z., Attila: *Cammogás. Minőségkonceptiók a romániai magyar középfokú oktatásban*, Soros Oktatási Központ, Csíkszereda 2007.

on the correspondence of the external expectations of the school and the internal demand-side expectations. As mentioned in relation to minority education, the notion of quality has a dimension of equity in it, since it implies that every learner should be accepted as they are; that is, children have to be admitted regardless of their family background and differences in ability. At the same time, the logic of high standards demands fighting for talented children and "topping off" children of good abilities. Based on these considerations, we can assert that minority schools should become quality institutions. Within the institution, this quality should be guaranteed with the help of a quality assurance system, and continuous external assessment would also be necessary to monitor academic performance.

The social composition of the learners of a school is also decisive in the assessment of institutions. This may have an ethnically neutral effect that we can call "small town elitism": if locally acknowledged people send their children to a certain school, the majority of the parents may take that as a sign that it is a "good school" where they can enrol their own children with confidence.

At the same time, the interpretation of the social background of children can also take place in terms of ethnicity, for it is important to emphasize the presence of Romas in the schools outside Hungary as well. A high Roma ratio may represent a disincentive force for parents who, consequently, will enrol their children in other schools. However, choosing a different school is often equal to choosing a language, as manifested in several Hungarian minority contexts. In many places, the school presence of Hungarian speaking Romas is "resolved" by setting up segregated institutions, which is what we saw at our research locations of Mukacheve (Munkács), Berehove (Beregszász), and Gheorgheni (Gyergyószentmiklós).<sup>25</sup> The maintenance of segregated institutions, once again, raises the issue of equity, since it is common knowledge that in these schools, the quality and performance of education leaves a lot to be desired.

### *c. Micro-level factors*

All in all, school choice is a matter of individual and family decisions. Research has shown that parents with a higher socio-economic

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<sup>25</sup> See relevant studies. (ed.)

status are more likely to have both the ability and the willingness to select a school for their children. For middle-class parents, the schooling of their children and thus, the re-creation of resources is part of some kind of a family strategy.<sup>26</sup>

However, a family may determine the school choice of the children even without a conscious strategy, simply by family tradition, which might mean that the children will go to a similar school or to the very same school as their parents did, or that all the other children within the family attend. The latter family tradition is also supported by legal regulations in several countries because it is often considered as an advantage if the elder sibling also attends or attended the same institution.

School choice can be classified according to educational levels as well: on the lower levels, it is usually the parents who decide about it, while on the higher levels, students have increasing freedom and responsibility in making this decision. These decisions are often influenced by peer pressure, and the re-creation of shared kindergarten experience or lower school level social relations. It should be noted that peer pressure may also have ethnic dimensions: at one of the research locations, it turned out that opting for non-mother-tongue education was decided by the existence of an ethnically mixed circle of friends. Logically, this kind of school choice can happen primarily in a dispersed settlement context. At another research location, we identified a source of "adult peer pressure": in an interethnic context, parents have to "come out" at their workplace regarding the schooling of their children, which also entails that they have to reveal their ethnic identity. In an interethnic environment, that might lead to internal conflicts, and in order to avoid that, parents prefer to enrol their children in majority national-language education.

According to our respondents, the prestige of schools and the local opinion about them are usually established on the basis of information received through informal channels. That is partly understandable as in the countries examined, the practice of external school assessment is not really widespread. Although the institutions participate in national tests, the results are usually not communicated publicly,

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<sup>26</sup> See Bourdieu's classic description of these strategies: Bourdieu, Pierre – Passeron, Jean-Claude: *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*. Sage, 1990.



so parental decisions can rely on such information only to a minor extent.

Choosing the language of education poses the most acute problem in mixed marriages. On the basis of the accounts of the respondents, several schooling strategies can be identified within interethnic marriages. In some cases, parents decide the language of education of their future children even before getting married. In other cases, the decision is made on the basis of the current school market and the plans regarding the children's future. Although it cannot be demonstrated statistically from the present research, it would be a safe guess to say that in mixed marriages, parents are more inclined to enrol their children in majority-language education.<sup>27</sup>

*Translated by Judit Pethő-Szirmai*

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<sup>27</sup> According to data by Ferenc Dobos, 45-70 percent of mixed marriage parents in the neighbouring countries enrol their children in majority national-language education schools. See Dobos, Ferenc: *Asszimilációs folyamatok az erdélyi, felvidéki, kárpátaljai és vajdasági magyarság körében 1996-2011*. B Fókusz Intézet, 2011. Retrievable from: <http://www.kmkf.hu/tartalom/asssimilacio.pdf>



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*Tünde Morvai – László Szarka*

## **School choice in South Slovakia Practices in Gemer (Gömör), Matušova zem (Mátyusföld) and Podzoborie (Zoboralja)**

Among Slovakia's districts inhabited by Hungarians, the number of Hungarian primary school pupils has decreased in the highest ratio in the district of Nitra (Nyitra) where Hungarians live in dispersed settlements. The language of instruction has crucial effects on national identity, therefore, education in the majority's language leads to assimilation. During an interview process, we investigated the school selection view-points of the inhabitants in seven locations with Hungarian instruction schools. According to our most important finding, in order to preserve the native language programme education, it is necessary to support the usage of the Hungarian language in the widest range.

In the case of sociological studies carried out among Hungarians living beyond Hungary's borders, it is of crucial importance that we do not consider the minority communities in question as a homogenous unit, but that we take into account the characteristics of different interethnic, social, linguistic, and micro-regional situations. During our research on school selection, we carried out our local study separately in the case of Hungarians living in local majority communities and Hungarians living sporadically in small towns and villages in Slovakia. Despite the fact that the absolute majority of Slovakian Hungarians still live in towns where they form a local majority, the process of the population becoming more and more dispersed is a real problem.

In 2001, there were 411 towns with a Hungarian majority; however, in 144 locations there was no Hungarian-language school. According to minority sources, the number of towns with a Hungarian majority decreased by about 50 according to 2011 census data. In 2011, out of the 363 Hungarian majority towns only 227 had

a Hungarian-language elementary school (in Slovak the term translates into ‘basic school’), which means that the number of villages (136) with a Hungarian majority without a school also decreased. In the meantime, 21 additional Hungarian-language schools had to be closed.<sup>1</sup>

The phenomenon of dispersing tendencies is observable in the increasingly mixed Hungarian-Slovak ethnic contact zone. Which at one time was describable as a “distinct boundary of languages” following ethnic boundaries has become today more or less a zone of mixed Hungarian-Slovak-Roma towns (Keményfi 2003). This process is particularly true for cities that began to grow rapidly for various reasons (Senec [Szenc], Galanta [Galánta], Šala [Vágsellye], Levice [Léva], Lučenec [Losonc], Moldava nad Bodvou [Szepsi]) and in the extended agglomerations of the Slovakian cities of Bratislava (Pozsony) and Košice (Kassa). The Hungarian majority areas of Gemer (Gömör), Abov-Turňa (Abaúj-torna) and Zemplín (Zemplén) with a contiguous Hungarian populated zone, situated between the national border and the language border, broke off along the line of several towns where the ratio of the Roma population is continuously increasing. This implies – with the exception of the Roma with a traditional Hungarian identity in Gemer (Gömör) and Medzibodrožie (Bodroghköz) – the strengthening of the Roma or the Slovak ethnic element in more and more areas.

According to the official data on the homepage of the Slovakian Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education, the school-age population of Hungarian ethnicity dropped from 44,218 to 34,203 between 2003 and 2011. This corresponds to a 20% decline. During the

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<sup>1</sup> For the 2001-2011 census data, see the electronic publications of the homepage of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (*Základné údaje*, 2012). According to the methodological guideline of the census, the definition of nationality is “being part of a nation or an ethnic group. It is defined on the basis of the individual’s decision. The resident’s mother tongue or the language used by them is not important, what matters is the individual’s decision about being part of a nation, a national minority or an ethnic group.” Ibid. 6. A 2001. évi szlovákiai magyar intézményi ellátottsági helyzetről, *Soóky*, 2003. The statistical data of Hungarian-language schools in Slovakia were collected from the electronic educational yearbooks and chronological data publications of the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (*Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva*) [http://www.uips.sk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=459&Itemid=1187](http://www.uips.sk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=459&Itemid=1187).

same period, the number of Hungarian learners increased only in the districts of Revúca (Nagyrőce) and Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat). The number of pupils who considered themselves to be Hungarian increased from 1,038 to 1,288, that is by 24.1%, in the former case, while in the latter, this number shows an increment of 1.6%, or an increase from 3,571 to 3,628 (*Štatistická ročenka – základné školy 2003-2011*). Parallel with the decrease in the number of school-age children of Hungarian ethnicity, the number of Hungarian pupils in Slovak elementary schools, despite some decline, is still considerable at 10%. In 2003, out of the 44,218 elementary school pupils of Hungarian ethnicity, 37,736, that is 85.34%, attended Hungarian-language schools. Eight years later, in the 2011-2012 academic year, out of the total 34,203 pupils of Hungarian ethnicity, 30,522, that is 89.24%, acquired elementary school knowledge in Hungarian (*Štatistická ročenka – Školy a žiaci denného štúdia 1989-2011*).

### **1. The methodology of the study**

Our study focused on revealing local problems; therefore, we tried to choose towns in all three micro-regions where the language of instruction, attendance and degree of supply in educational institutions reflected the situation of the characteristic (regional, small town, provincial, etc.) school types with Hungarian as the language of instruction. We carried out semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in the 14 selected towns. Altogether 40 interviews took place, that is, in the district of Gemer (Gömör), Revúca (Nagyrőce) and Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat) 20, in the district of Galanta (Galánta) of Matušova zem (Mátyusföld) 8, in Podzoborie (Zoboralja) and in the district of Nitra (Nyitra) 12 interviews. Thus altogether 40 interviews and one focus group interview were carried out in each micro-region. The focus group interview in Gemer (Gömör) was made with teachers from Tornaľa (Tornalja) and neighbouring Hungarian majority towns; while in the district of Galanta (Galánta) and Nitra (Nyitra), it was carried out with the help of seventh graders of one of the local schools. The rest of the interviews were conducted with headmasters (8), teachers (14), parents (13) and local civic leaders (5) in the towns of four school districts. The

following villages were included: Gemerská Ves (Gömörfalva) (Hrkáč [Harkács]), Tornaľa (Tornalja) in the district of Revúca (Nagyróce); Barca (Baraca), Kaloša (Kálosa), Radnovce (Nemesradnót) and Rimavská Seč (Rimaszécs) in the district of Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat); Horné Saliby (Felsőszeli) and Galanta (Galánta) in the district of Galanta (Galánta); Jelenec (Gímes), Kolíňany (Kolon), Dolné Obdokovce (Alsóbodok), Pohranice (Pográny), Velký Cetín (Nagycétény), Klasov (Kálaz) in the district of Nitra (Nyitra).

By choosing a qualitative research method, our primary aim was to learn about, (by collecting and analysing the local narratives of the subject matter), the historical, social, familial and socialisational reasons, arguments, and motives of loyalty and identity in the context of making a seemingly simple decision about school choice. Accordingly, the interviewees were not only asked about their current strategy of school choice but also about their own educational path as well as that of their children. We consider it important to analyze the career path of parents and teachers as well.

We managed to uncover several unique stories among those who attended Slovak-language elementary schools. The story of a pupil's mother of Slovak ethnicity in one of the Hungarian-language schools in Podzoborie (Zoboralja) revealed that her children attend a Hungarian-language school because her Hungarian spouse in Podzoborie (Zoboralja) had set the education of their future children in Hungarian as a condition of their marriage. In Gemer (Gömör), we were faced with the dilemma of a Roma family of Hungarian mother tongue which was forced to make a decision based on the welfare services provided by the schools. Although the parents consider Slovak-language education more and more useful for their children because the employment opportunities in the Slovak Republic would provide a real way out of the unemployment that is a characteristic of the micro-regions of Gemer (Gömör).

Another example is the story of parents from a Hungarian-Slovak mixed marriage who finished their elementary school studies in Slovak in Nitra (Nyitra). Nitra (Nyitra), the centre of the district with a population of nearly 1,500 ethnic Hungarians, does not have a Hungarian-language elementary school. Hungarian parents in Nitra (Nyitra) could send their children to neighbouring towns which have Hungarian-language elementary schools. According

to the people interviewed, this is very rarely the case. We encountered a similar situation in the Hungarian-language of the district of Galanta [Galánta]. From the neighbouring town with a Hungarian majority, an unemployed mother – due to the recent closure of the local Hungarian school – takes her two children to the „town school” by bus every day.

According to one of our interviewees who had attended a Slovak elementary school and whose parents were Hungarian, they went to a Slovak-language school because their mother, out of political considerations, opted for the majority language of instruction in the era before the change of the political system in 1989. However, there were contrasting examples as well when parents with strong Slovak ties or a pure Slovak family background picked a Hungarian elementary school for their children because they regarded studying a foreign language as an integral part of education.

During our interviews with the teachers, headmasters and parents, we tried to learn about the ethnic, social, socializational, qualitative and other reasons peculiar to each micro-region for choosing a school and how they are interrelated. In fact, it was one of the hypotheses or the starting assumptions of the entire study that when choosing a minority Hungarian-language school it is not solely the ethnic considerations that play a role. Therefore, when planning the factors that to influence school choice, it would be important to know the real background. In our research, we only examined schools run by the state and municipalities presuming that opting for the handful of Hungarian denominational and private schools was influenced by completely different factors.

## **2. Trends in Hungarian-language education in Gemer (Gömör)**

The districts inhabited by Hungarians in the historic South Slovakian Gemer (Gömör) region have been gerrymandered to provide administrative divisions which ensure the regional majority of the Slovak population. The Hungarians of the region are forced into a minority position everywhere (even on a local regional level): namely, in the districts of Revúca (Nagyőrce), Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat)

and Rožňava (Rozsnyó) crossing language boundaries and comprised of towns interlinked in a north-south direction. Nonetheless, the Hungarians of the river and stream valleys of Gemer (Gömör) try to assert their minority interests in the framework of the existing administrative zones and through cultural and educational cooperation between municipalities. For instance, the villages of the valley of the Slaná (Sajó) have developed touristic cooperation in the Slaná (Sajó) Valley Micro-region by setting up an information centre in 2008. Similar initiatives can be observed in the cooperation of villages with a Hungarian majority in the valleys of the Blh (Balog), the Rimavská (Rima), the Valice (Vály) and the Cremosná (Csermosnya) who work together, from time to time, with neighbouring Hungarian micro-regions.<sup>2</sup>

The two districts selected for our research represent remarkable exceptions with respect to the number of school-age youth of Hungarian ethnicity. The previously mentioned increase in population indicates an unusual growth, and it must be closely related to the higher number of children in Hungarian mother tongue Roma families of the two micro-regions. The fact that this ethnic data is currently present in the Hungarian school registration data of Gemer (Gömör) is a promising sign.

In 2011, we examined Hungarian school choice and registration trends as a pilot field study in cooperation with the pupils of the Faculty of Education of the János Selye University and the Municipal Cultural Centre of Tornaľa (Tornalja). We carried out interviews with teachers and parents in the last small town with a Hungarian majority in Gemer (Gömör) and the neighbouring villages. In addition, in the framework of a focus group interview in Tornaľa (Tornalja), we tried to assess the headmasters' opinion regarding the present and the future of small schools – that are characteristic of Hungarian education of the micro-region – as well as that of mixed Hungarian-Roma education.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Information centre in Tornaľa (Tornalja), *Új Szó*, 30 April 2007; On the cooperation between the micro-regions of the valley of the Slaná (Sajó) and Bátortereeny, see *Összefog két határmenti kistérség*, Ibid. 14 December 2007.

<sup>3</sup> The outlines of the interviews were made by Attila Z. Papp who participated in the pilot studies as well. The polls made by the Áron Márton College with the purpose of updating the data of the across-border Hungarian educational survey in Slovakia were performed during field work. Cf. The database of the Hungarian educational and scientific institutes in the Carpathian Basin. . <http://kataszter.martonaron.hu/index.php?page=adat>



Tornaľa (Tornalja) belongs to the district of Revúca (Nagyőrce), and it is an important centre of the Slovakia's Hungarians of the Slaná (Sajó) valley, fulfilling several functions of a district centre. The town has one mixed Hungarian-Slovak-language and one Hungarian-language kindergarten, two Hungarian-language elementary schools, one Hungarian-language secondary school and one 'special' school (for children with special needs) operating with three merged classes.<sup>4</sup> Apart from the two schools in Tornaľa (Tornalja), there are nine-grade Hungarian-language elementary schools in Hrkáč (Harkács) and Gemer (Sajógömör). In the schools of Hucín (Gice) and Držkovce (Deresk), there are only four classes at the lower elementary level. During the 2012 school registration, 116 children were enrolled in the six schools of the district, out of which 80 first graders started their studies in the Ferenc Kazinczy Hungarian-language Elementary School of Tornaľa (Tornalja). The two lower-elementary schools, however, attracted only 4 pupils, respectively.

In the neighbouring district of Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat), there are altogether 36 Hungarian-language elementary schools, out of which only 7 are fully developed or nine-grade institutions. Out of the 29 lower-elementary schools, 22 institutions do not have enough pupils to launch four different classes. Children are taught in three merged classes in three schools, in two merged classes in 15 schools and in one merged class in five villages.<sup>5</sup> In the 2012-2013 school year, altogether 486 first graders were enrolled in the above mentioned schools. 63 families enrolled their children in the Mihály Tompa Hungarian-language Elementary School, which is the biggest school of the district of Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat). Twenty or more first graders started their studies in the 2012-2013 school year in the school of Bátka (Bátka), in the fully segregated school of the Dúža settlement inhabited by Roma in Rimavská Sobota (Rimas-

<sup>4</sup> The 2010-2011 data of the seven Hungarian-language educational institutions in Tornaľa (Tornalja) can be found at the following address: [http://kataszter.martonaron.hu/index.php?page=adat&p=1&desc=&orderby=&institute\\_type\\_id=&country\\_id=5&county\\_name=&city=tornalja&name=&leader\\_name=&terkepkel](http://kataszter.martonaron.hu/index.php?page=adat&p=1&desc=&orderby=&institute_type_id=&country_id=5&county_name=&city=tornalja&name=&leader_name=&terkepkel)

<sup>5</sup> The data of Hungarian schools in the district of Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat) can be found at the following address: [http://kataszter.martonaron.hu/index.php?page=adat&p=1&desc=&orderby=&institute\\_type\\_id=&country\\_id=&county\\_name=rimaszombat&city=&name=&leader\\_name=&terkepkel](http://kataszter.martonaron.hu/index.php?page=adat&p=1&desc=&orderby=&institute_type_id=&country_id=&county_name=rimaszombat&city=&name=&leader_name=&terkepkel)

zombat) and in the Hungarian-language schools of Jesenské (Feled), Hodejov (Várgede) and Lenartovce (Lénártfalva). At the same time, the number of first graders enrolled was less than 10 in 21 schools, among them such Hungarian villages of great history as Hajnáčka (Ajnácskő) (9), Král' (Sajószentkirály) (8), Blhovce (Balogfalva) (7), Nová Bašta (Egyházashátság) (6), Chanava (Hanva) (5), Rimavské Janovce (Jánosi) and Tachty (Tajti) (1-1). (Štatistická ročenka – základné školy, 2011-2012)

Nevertheless, municipalities and teachers which still try to hold on to the bitter end to small schools find themselves in an increasingly difficult situation. The Hungarian headmasters and teachers participating in the focus group interview in Tornaľa (Tornalja) argued according to their individual situation for or against the small schools that are operating with mixed classes in most places. The arguments of the supporters of district and town schools related to the equipment, and the number of teachers and their competitiveness, while representatives of the small schools mentioned 'the loss of the last and only intellectual workplace' in their hometown, the bonds of their native village, staying in place and strengthening community relations. Apart from the many advantages of the dual maintenance of schools by the state and municipalities, these contrasting opinions were also good indicators of the fact that small villages in the face of a rapidly decreasing population can only maintain their schools with the inclusion of Hungarian mother tongue Roma families.

Since the majority of pupils enrolled in Hungarian schools come from Roma families in an increasing number of towns, the process of segregation is gaining momentum in the Gemer (Gömör) micro-regions as well. Consequently, Hungarian parents send their children to municipal or district schools of a Hungarian majority to Tornaľa (Tornalja), Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat), and Plešivec (Pelsőc), while local Roma families are left to their own devices in the Hungarian-language schools maintained by small towns. At several places, this process of segregation makes its influence felt not only in schools, but it transforms entire towns from Hungarian farmer villages to communities exclusively composed of Romas. In the villages of Barca (Baraca) and Kaloša (Kálósa), this process is quite advanced. In the towns of Radnovce (Nemesradnót) and Rimavská

Seč (Rimaszécs), the local majority is comprised of Romas as well. (Prónai, 2005, Gecse, 2007)

Regarding the Hungarian-language rural schools that have a Roma majority for the most part, the representatives of the local Hungarian and Roma communities mentioned four kinds of behaviour in the interviews conducted during our fieldwork.

1. According to a considerable number of parents, the first years of school should require no travelling if possible, and it should be near the place of residence, the hometown and the family. In order to achieve this, even the disadvantages of small schools and the conflicts of coexistence with Roma pupils are worth the price. Furthermore, parents should join forces with the mayor in order to have an orderly and fruitful education in the school. It is to be feared, however, that without efficient state-run grant programmes or well thought-out educational models, these endeavours are doomed to failure in the short run in the Hungarian towns of Gemer (Gömör) that are slowly overwhelmed by the Roma population, and are thus finding themselves in a socially disadvantaged and deteriorating situation.
2. It would be a mistake to underestimate the role of patterns that emerge in the settlements from time to time among parents and pupils. These patterns are often shaped by the local school or a neighbouring one, the good reputation of the teachers working there as well as by the appeal of the schools entitled to receive certain social benefits (free meals, school equipment) because of their socially disadvantaged pupils.
3. These small schools represent a negative and unsustainable model for those parents and teachers who stress the difficulties of acquiring competitive knowledge through them. Therefore, parents make an effort to enrol their children in a nearby district school or municipal school in the centre of the region. This family strategy has an adverse effect on the survival of the local network of schools wherever there is a Hungarian-language school in the centre of a micro-region. In the district of Gemer (Gömör), due to the increasing appeal of the central and municipal schools of Hrkáč [Harkács], Plešivec (Pelsőc), Tornaľa (Tornalja) and Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat), rural small schools quickly find their existence threatened despite the fact that they are

unique in the country and the number of children is increasing. This process is apparently intensified by segregation trends that can be observed in the entire region of East-Central Europe in the micro-regions inhabited by the Roma.

4. In village schools with a Hungarian majority, parents who attribute great importance to the knowledge of languages regarding the future of their children's career consider acquisition of proficiency in the majority language as hopeless from the onset. Therefore, they opt for municipal schools.

Regarding the first kind of attitude, parental opinions accepting coexistence – and by extension, common education as a concomitant of local circumstances of life – are losing ground in the towns of Gemer (Gömör) that we studied. In most places, the school cannot handle the common problems of the 2 schools due to the deepening social and cultural differences and the frequent local conflicts. Even those parents who do not enrol their children in urban schools regard choosing a school with a Roma majority as a temporary solution at the lower elementary level. According to the interviewees, the main reason for this is not the majority of Roma pupils and their educational and behavioural problems but the poorer equipment of small rural schools and the inferior quality of education in merged classes.

Headmasters, teachers, and Hungarian parents are all aware that when Roma families choose schools with a Hungarian or a Slovak majority, this can fundamentally determine the fate of individual villages and the situation of Hungarian-language education in an entire micro-region. Debates and questions surrounding the proper acquisition of the majority Slovak language date back to the emergence of the Hungarian school system in Slovakia. Today, the only promising attempts signal a shift towards the communication-centred majority language education. Obviously, the majority of Hungarian and Roma parents of Hungarian mother tongue are equally aware that education in their mother tongue for their children could pose a lesser problem. At the same time, they would also welcome a good quality education in the Slovak language. A Roma mother who raised two children who have already finished secondary school and who, at the time, had chosen the local Hungarian-language school of Nižná Kaloša (Alsókálósa) over the Slovak one (closed in the meantime due to the lack of children) claimed:

*“Hungarian was a better choice for me and it was good for us, I could pay more attention to them and they wouldn’t have obtained a secondary school diploma or nothing (smile). Really, because they wouldn’t have been able to cope with Slovak. That’s why it was this way.”*

This demonstrates the difficulty of choice and starting a career in a micro-region in spite of a successful final exam, which is extraordinary among the Roma, both youngsters of Kaloša (Kálosa) have been unemployed for two years. Even their intermediate knowledge of English is of little help, and they obviously regret having attended a secondary school. They are without work just like those who didn’t even finish elementary school. They would like to acquire a pedagogical qualification in a complementary school, so that they could get a job in the local school. They do not aspire to higher education due to lack of funds, but if they had known about the possibility of getting a scholarship, they would probably have tried to get into a university.

The changing appeal of Hungarian schools in a Roma majority area demonstrates the power, or the lack thereof, of the local patterns that historically have worked well for a long time. In the town of Radnovce (Radnót) in the Blh (Balog) valley, which still retains a gentry past in its appearances, but today has a strong Roma-Hungarian majority, a mother of three of Slovak ethnicity living in a mixed Hungarian Slovak marriage and working in the local school during the day as a teacher, considered the only Hungarian-language elementary school of the village as a self-evident solution for her children:

*“Since we are of Hungarian origin, the idea of choosing the Slovak school didn’t even occur to us. Although my dad is Slovak and I’m a little of both. But my husband is Hungarian and I consider myself of Hungarian origin after my mother. My children are also Hungarians but naturally, they also speak Slovak like I do because in Slovakia, in this world, it is a must. Take my grandchildren, the eldest is 15 years old and he attends a Slovak school, upper elementary, he has just started (...) because for the kind of job he picked, that is architect, there were no other schools to attend in Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat) but this Slovak one. And he finished a Hungarian school, the one in Bátka (Bátka), but there was only a Slovak school there so he just started in Slovak, whether*

*he succeeds or not, I have no idea. So we are amalgams of a sort. But I'm happy about this because we live in Slovakia and here if somebody goes to official places they say 'Dobrý deň!'. What's more, they won't say a word in Hungarian to me in that situation."*

The majority of pupils in the Hungarian-language school of Radnovce (Radnót) and Rimavská Seč (Rimaszécs), similar to the one in Barca (Baraca), are Roma. The interviews with the teachers in Barca (Baraca) and Radnovce (Radnót) revealed that an increasing proportion of Roma families try to spend time with their children at home to strengthen their education. The walls of the school corridors in Barca (Baraca) where only Roma pupils learn, are decorated with the medals and memorial certificates of the victories of pupils in national and district competitions. Apart from the extra energy required to continuously maintain the quality level of education, special talent is needed in order to prepare pupils for competitions while holding daily classes.

*"Yes, let's say that I'm in charge of first graders because I'm with them inside and I hold their hands. But the children are very good, very clean and clever if they have a good head on their shoulders. But these children here, we see that they are properly looked after, cared for, some really care for them. This is a Roma school that only Roma children attend. Clean, very proper, they have to go to school, I don't know, we visited several schools in the neighbourhood because my children and grandchildren already finished school, but a school like this, as decent as this one, I'm not saying this because I work here but still... (...) It's great here, the teachers, the headmistress, the janitor are all great. You can go to the rest room, it's like a five-star hotel, very orderly but really you must go in and see it for yourself, otherwise you might not believe me."*

The merging of schools in Gemer (Gömör), also supported by the state of Slovakia, has its unique contradictions. While the municipalities of the micro-region dominated by small villages are unable – despite their efforts – to ensure appropriate conditions of education in the small schools and in the long run they quite often operate with only one merged class, at the same time more and more parents opt for enrolling their children in an urban school. At the same time, the number of pupils in the urban environment does not grow at the

pace expected. In this context of competing Slovak- and Hungarian-language urban schools, more and more people choose the Slovak ones due to the criterion of “more efficient self-fulfilment” associated with the knowledge of Slovak and also as a result of mixed marriages opting mostly and increasingly for the Slovak language and schools.

This way, Hungarian pupils commuting from small villages to the city can barely make up for the children of urban Hungarian families choosing majority language schools. For rural pupils, studying in small cities or even in district schools provides a way of getting into higher education. When asked about the reasons for choosing the small town elementary school after or instead of the local small school, in increasing numbers the Hungarian parents of Kaloša (Kálósa) mentioned the higher standards and the better preparation as their main reason:

*“We had made some inquiries and we only heard good things about the secondary school of Tornal’a (Tornalja) so they prepare really great pupils. Two of my kids can illustrate this, they are very versatile, I don’t know, can I say this? My son was the only one to participate in the 20th international Math competition which was held in Bonyhád this year but he took part every year in the Math and Hungarian-language competition as well. In the reciting contest, my daughter won first place so this school prepares them for a lot of things and I’m happy that they attend this school.”*

Hungarian parents are divided in several other South Slovakian cities over choosing urban Slovak or Hungarian schools. Parents usually start considering as early as at the time of choosing a kindergarten that in Hungarian-inhabited cities, the transmission of Hungarian as a language is taken for granted while the acquisition of Slovak is regarded more feasible in majority kindergartens and schools. There are, for instance, families in Komárno (Komárom) and Dunajská Streda (Dunaszerdahely) that enrol their children in Hungarian elementary schools after completing the Slovak-language kindergarten where the children have acquired a solid foundation in the Slovak language.

The phenomenon of choosing a school in Hungary across the border in the villages and small cities near Gemer (Gömör) gained momentum in recent years. This can mainly be observed in the case of secondary schools that offer a higher standard of education or a secure profes-

sion, but it is not uncommon in the upper elementary, either, that they enrol children in schools in Hungary. We found only sporadic examples for cross-border, inter-school cooperation, though, a well thought-out interinstitutional cooperation could solve many problems.

In Gemer (Gömör), the willingness of Roma children with Hungarian mother tongue to attend Hungarian language schools, which is still two to three times bigger than the average, ensures the survival of existing bigger Hungarian-language schools in the short run. However, this cannot be taken for granted in the case of small schools in the districts of Revúca (Nagyőrce) and Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat). Despite various one of a kind actions, positive initiatives, and institutional efforts, there is no comprehensive idea and programme concerning the Hungarian-language education of the South Slovakian Roma of Hungarian mother tongue. The *Roma school* of Rimavská Seč (Rimaszécs), the only “beyond-the-border” institution of the Hungarian *school programme*, tries to continue its talent programme amidst financial difficulties year after year and accordingly, its role as an example is minimal.

### **3. Elementary schools in the centre of the district and the big villages of Matušova zem (Mátyusföld)**

In the last fifty years, the (Czech)Slovakian public administrative divisions that often alternated each other, have basically induced solutions aiming at assimilation not only in Gemer (Gömör) but in Matušova zem (Mátyusföld) as well, bordering the Hungarian bloc of Žitný ostrov (Csallóköz) from the north. Each of the districts of Senec (Szenc), Galanta (Galánta), Šaľa (Vágsellye) and Nové Zámky (Érsekújvár) were established on a north-south axis, so that the Hungarian majority strip of the southern territories found itself in a minority position everywhere against the Slovak parts annexed to the same district and lying north of the language border.

This way, after the big public administrative restructuring of 1960s, the so called “big district” in Galanta (Galánta) encompassed the former purely Slovak district of Sereď (Szered) and the former district of Šaľa (Vágsellye) that is half-Hungarian but has a Slovak majority centre (Kocsis, 1995; Szarka, 2001). Among the Hungarian



majority towns of the district, Topolníky (Nyárasd) is the only one where there is no Hungarian-language school. Among schools that have only lower elementary section, the one in Kráľov Brod (Királyrét) operates with three mixed classes while the schools of Dolný Chotár (Alsóhatár), Kajal (Kajal), Matúškovo (Taksony), Vozokany (Vezekény), and Čierny Brod (Vízkelet) have two, and the school of Košúty (Kossuth) has only one. In nearly all towns, more children were enrolled in 2012 than in the previous years.

*The Hungarian-language (HL) elementary schools of the district of Galanta (Galánta)*

|    | Town                      | Name of the school                                     | Type of school             |
|----|---------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 1  | Galanta (Galánta)         | Zoltán Kodály HL Elementary School                     | class 1-9                  |
| 2  | Sládkovičovo (Diószeg)    | HL Elementary School and Kindergarten                  | class and kindergarten 1-9 |
| 3  | Trstice (Nádszeg)         | HL Elementary School and Kindergarten                  | class and kindergarten 1-9 |
| 4  | Horné Saliby (Felsőszeli) | István Széchenyi HL Elementary School and Kindergarten | class and kindergarten 1-9 |
| 5  | Velké Úľany (Nagyfödemes) | Mihály Borsos HL Elementary School                     | class 1-9                  |
| 6  | Tomášikovo (Tallós)       | HL Elementary School and Kindergarten                  | class and kindergarten 1-4 |
| 7  | Jelka (Jóka)              | Lipót Gregovits HL Elementary School                   | class 1-9                  |
| 8  | Velká Mača (Nagymácséd)   | Dávid Mészáros HL Elementary School                    | class 1-9                  |
| 9  | Váhovce (Vága)            | HL Elementary School                                   | class 1-9                  |
| 10 | Mostová (Hidaskürt)       | HL Elementary School and Kindergarten                  | class and kindergarten 1-4 |
| 11 | Vozokany (Vezekény)       | HL Elementary School                                   | class 1-4                  |
| 12 | Dolné Saliby (Alsószeli)  | HL Elementary School                                   | class 1-4                  |
| 13 | Čierna Voda (Feketenyék)  | HL Elementary School                                   | class 1-4                  |
| 14 | Kráľov Brod (Királyrét)   | HL Elementary School                                   | class 1-4                  |
| 15 | Kajal (Nemeskajal)        | HL Elementary School                                   | class 1-4                  |
| 16 | Čierny Brod (Vízkelet)    | HL Elementary School                                   | class 1-4                  |
| 17 | Košúty (Nemeskosút)       | HL Elementary School                                   | class 1-4                  |
| 18 | Matúškovo (Taksony)       | HL Elementary School                                   | class and kindergarten 1-4 |
| 19 | Dolný Chotár (Alsóhatár)  | HL Elementary School                                   | class and kindergarten 4   |

Source: Štatistická ročenka– základné školy, 2011/2012, Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva. <http://www.uips.sk/prehlady-skol/statisticka-rocenka---zakladne-skoly>

It was considered a favourable development that, in the Hungarian-language school of the district centre of Galanta (Galánta) named so in honor of Zoltán Kodály, 26 families that are town residents enrolled their children, and apart from them, only 10 first graders were enrolled in Galanta (Galánta) from neighbouring villages. In the preceding years, several of the Hungarian families in Galanta (Galánta) picked the Slovak school, but this time, even parents whose children had attended a Slovak kindergarten opted for the Hungarian school.<sup>6</sup>

However, there are still serious problems regarding the number of pupils in the towns with a Hungarian majority in the vicinity of Galanta (Galánta) where the majority of Hungarian families registered their children in Galanta (Galánta) or a Slovak-language school: 1 first grader started the year in Matúškovo (Taksony) and Košúty (Nemeskosút), 2 in Čierny Brod (Vízkelet) and 4 in Kajal (Nemeskajal). In this district, only the villages of Jelka (Jóka) and Tomášikovo (Tallós) have a considerable Roma population, therefore, the behaviour of Roma families cannot be considered quintessential here.

Using our interviews, we wanted to gain an insight into the enrolment practices of the Hungarian and mixed families in Matúšova zem (Mátyusföld) through the situation of the district school of Galanta (Galánta) and the István Széchenyi Elementary School of Horné Saliby (Felsőszeli), which is one of the most successful Hungarian-language institutions of the micro-region. The number of pupils in each of the Hungarian schools of the district has been decreasing for the last 15 years, and the primary reason for that is the shrinking of the number of pupils in the school-age category of Hungarian-ancestry.

On the homepage of the Slovakian Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education, the data of the district of Galanta (Galánta) between 2003 and 2011 largely surpassed the afore-mentioned 20 percent reduction of the Slovakian school-age children of Hungarian ethnicity: in the central micro-region of Matúšova zem (Mátyusföld), the number of elementary school-age children of Hungarian ethnicity decreased by 32.4 per cent during the period of eight years available to us (Štatistická ročenka – základné školy, 2003-2011). The reasons cited for the rapid decrease of school-age classes of Hungarian

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<sup>6</sup> Enrolments: 36 first graders were enrolled in Galanta (Galánta) and 11 in Diakovce (Deáki), *Felvidék hírportál*, 14 February 2012 [www.felvidek.ma](http://www.felvidek.ma)

ethnicity are the fertility rate of Hungarian families which is below the national average, as well as the predominantly Slovak ethnicity of children born in mixed marriages are usually cited. These two factors also appear in other analysis of Matúšova zem (Mátyusföld).<sup>7</sup>

Among Hungarian-language schools in Galanta (Galánta), those that had only lower elementary classes found themselves in a difficult position during the past two decades. This was partly due to the overall decline in the number of children and partly because parents tried to enrol their children as soon as possible in schools that have both upper and lower elementary classes. The dramatic decline in the number of pupils in the Hungarian school of Galanta (Galánta) is an entirely different case for which there are different explanations. László Pukkai, the former president of the Slovakian Hungarian Association of Teachers and a retired teacher of the secondary school of Galanta (Galánta) believes that during the last 20-22 years, the number of pupils of the Hungarian-language elementary school has been nearly halved because of the assimilation potential of the Hungarian urban communities that was facilitated by their lost roots, and because of the ambiguous identity – which is getting more and more Slovak-dominated – of the “original dwellers of Galanta (Galánta)” intimidated by the reslovakization between 1945 and 1948.

#### *The loss of momentum of the assimilation alternative*

According to the headmistress of the school, the idea of assimilation as a way out seems to be losing momentum among the younger Hungarian city dwellers. Similarly to the other South Slovakian small towns, a considerable part of the Hungarians of Galanta (Galánta) also expected a miracle from the knowledge of Slovak. At the same time, the Slovak school choice has been shown to entail serious linguistic and spiritual difficulties for small children, and there is no

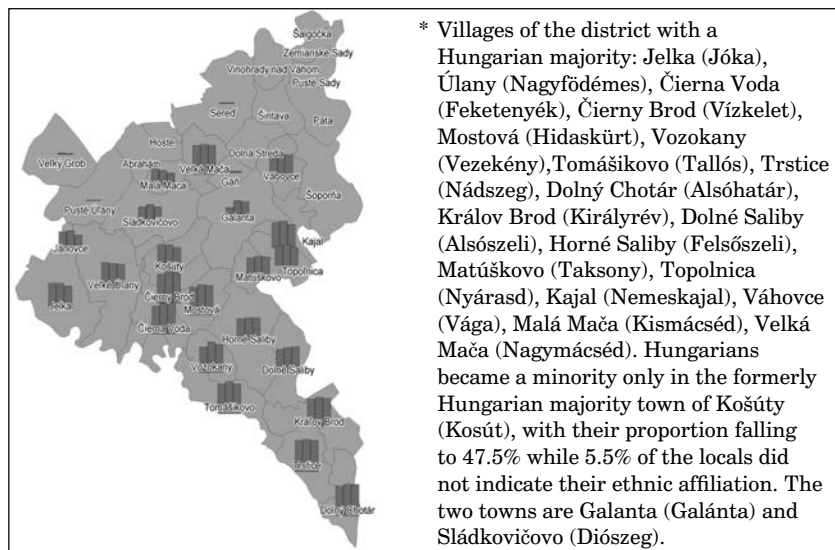
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<sup>7</sup> Among the reasons for the decrease, the similar data of the district of Dunajská Streda (Dunaszerdahely) bordering the one of Galanta (Galánta) often seem to call into question the supposedly greater willingness to assimilate in the border regions in a near-language-boundary situation. In the heart of Žitný ostrov (Csallóköz), which is relatively far from the highly intensive expansion of the agglomeration of Bratislava (Pozsony), the number of pupils of Hungarian ethnicity dropped by 27.4 percent between 2003 and 2011 which is, taking into account migration loss as well, seems to support the strong fall in birth rate as the main reason.

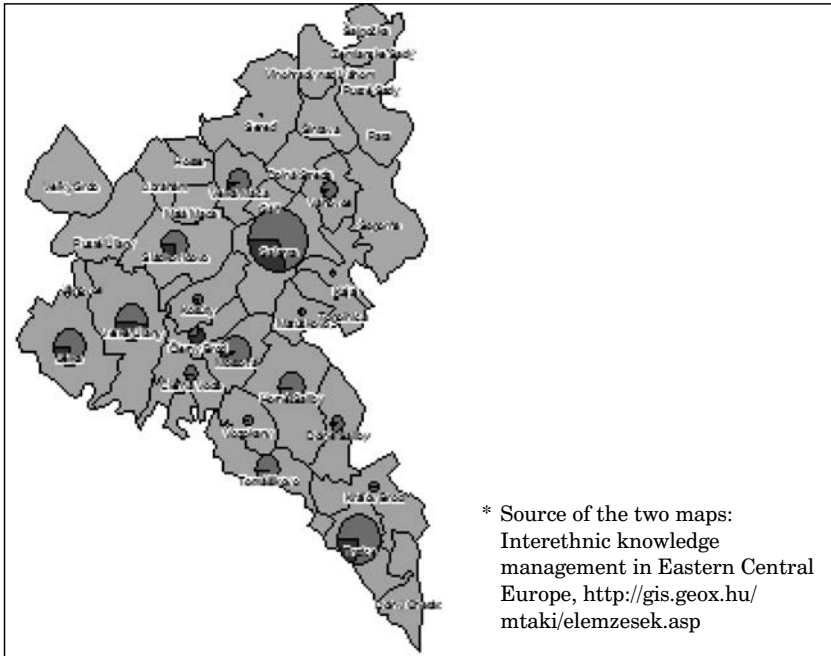
guarantee that after completing their studies, Hungarians leaving the majority school would be more successful in the job market than the ones attending a Hungarian school.

*“There are 340 children here. This is the third year that this number seems to consolidate because compared to 1990 and 2000, let’s say rather to 2000, when we had 600 children in the upper elementary, the number of children decreased by dozens from year to year. It is possible that there was a baby boom of a kind back then and we had a lot of children here and in Slovak schools as well. After the year 2005, we could really feel that a lot of children were taken to Slovak schools. When the huge popularity of the idea that ‘Hungarian kids should be enrolled in Hungarian schools’ ended, well, we were pretty desperate. This is perhaps the third year that this trend has been halted. If I project it to the next 5-6 years, – one can pick up indicators here and there – it seems to become stable. This means that, with the exception of the fourth grade, we will have parallel classes in every class next year. We could have one in the fourth grade as well but, in that case, we do not split up the 28 children due to economic considerations.”*

*The Hungarian population of the district of Galanta (Galánta) between 1980 and 2001\**



*The ratio of pupils attending Hungarian- and Slovak-language schools in the Hungarian majority towns of the district\**



One of the most serious educational problems of Hungarian-language elementary schools in the district is the decrease in the number of rural small schools in the vicinity of the large towns and the disproportionately strong appeal of the urban schools. While in the other small town of the district, Sládkovičovo (Diószeg) and in the central towns of the bordering two districts of Matúšova zem (Mátyusföld), Senec (Szenc), and Šaľa (Vágsellye), the goal is more and more the mere preservation of the Hungarian school, the school of Galanta (Galánta) has stabilised its position largely due, in fact, to the influx of pupils from neighbouring villages. When asked to assess this tendency, which could be a potential source of major conflicts, the headmaster of the school of Galanta (Galánta) thought that by choosing the urban Hungarian school, parents try to secure quality education for their children.

*(...) a lot of people bring in their children from as early as the first grade, not the fifth. But while we had one class in the first grade,*

*sometimes we opened three classes in the fifth. Surely, since the number of children is pretty low in rural schools, there are mixed classes – several grades are taught in the same class – and parents fear that, in this way, their children can't get as high quality education as when they study in separate classes. I don't reproach neighbouring schools – but sometimes I hear from parents that some teachers there are not always on top of the situation (...) But in Kráľová pri Senc (Királyfa), for example, the teachers who worked there could have taught anywhere."*

*Language of instruction, majority language – bilingualism*

The Zoltán Kodály elementary school is in competition with the other three Slovak schools of the city for children among whom many Hungarians continue to study in Slovak schools. In recent years, they tried to target young parents living in a mixed marriage, showing that there are institutional possibilities in the Hungarian-language schools to acquire a conscious and high-level bilingualism. It may be the first result of this information campaign that, in 2012, there was a positive turnaround in the enrolment willingness (far greater than previously) of mixed families which are residents of Galanta (Galánta) as well as among Hungarian first graders arriving from Slovak kindergartens. Moreover, they got positive feedback from parents that the school's intimate atmosphere is important and also the fact that this elementary school is better equipped than the Slovak ones. Parents and pupils also welcomed the conscious use of interactive boards and, in general, the systematic application of pictures and illustrative material. Pupils can become better engaged and education can be connected to careers in data processing, and textual and image content that comes natural to this generation.

Based on the experience of Galanta (Galánta), the success of Slovak language teaching depends on several factors: they range from choosing the right and efficient method of language instruction to family support and friendly background, and to the active reinforcement of linguistic knowledge. They very rarely lodge complaints against the standard of language instruction in the bilingual milieu of Galanta (Galánta).

Despite the educational and pedagogical support of Hungary, which has been criticised in many respects by teachers and pupils, the headmaster of the elementary school of Galanta (Galánta) considers

the potential tenders invited by the Gábor Bethlen Foundation extremely positive. This way, besides a stable Slovakian budgetary support, they can always count on the possibility of satisfying their developmental needs from Hungarian funds.

The interviews conducted with parents in Galanta (Galánta) reflected a positive opinion of the school. For a number of urban Hungarian families, choosing a Hungarian school means the potential for continuing their own school experience, in other cases, it could be the key for bringing up their children in balanced bilingualism. The parents of pupils enrolled to Galanta (Galánta) from neighbouring villages see urban schools as the guarantee of quality education and, quite practically, they usually bring children to school while going to work in Galanta (Galánta) or they teach their children how to travel independently on their own quite early.

The interview with the teachers gave us an opportunity to learn about the practical difficulties of teaching the majority Slovak language and the potential of the language owing to the bilingual small town milieu. They try methodological innovations – other than the “Szkabela-Bona” method developed by Slovakian Hungarian teachers 15 years ago – in Slovak classes whose effectiveness is augmented by the fact that there are one or two pupils with Slovak language proficiency in nearly every class who can be really involved in the exercises illustrating new material.

*“I have a lucky combination of pupils in my class since there are three children coming from a mixed marriage and I have a purely Slovak girl whose parents don’t know anything in Hungarian. And I don’t know, somehow the rest too, maybe there are a few weaker pupils, that’s true, but the majority of the 27 children – about 15 – surely have a very good vocabulary. And they have probably learnt it at home.”*

The teacher brought up a very interesting example of the language profile of the Hungarian-language school that has potential for the majority as well. She shared the story of two Slovak parents who did not speak any Hungarian and still chose Kodály for their children saying that learning a foreign language at school age is important. In Galanta (Galánta), if there is one language that can be learned really well, that is Hungarian. The decision of one Slovak family was reinforced by what happened to the mother:

*“ (...) she lost her job and she was offered a really good post in Bratislava (Pozsony) where speaking Hungarian was a condition for the job. Then she said that now she has all the more reason not to regret that her daughter attends this school because this would have been an excellent job, true, in Bratislava (Pozsony). The company she would have worked for had some kind of relations with the Hungarian plant, but she was eliminated at an early stage due to her lack of Hungarian.”*

In the bilingual environment of Galanta (Galánta) and the surrounding villages, the changes of the situation, the prestige and the relations to one another of the two languages with different status and the esteem of bilingualism have always come down hard on parents facing the choice between “majority” and “minority” schools. According to Zsuzsa Árendás who studied the question in the framework of a doctoral dissertation, although there is a strong correlation between the ethnic makeup of the families and school selection, their choice is almost always influenced on some level by considerations of success related to the child’s career and the parents’ expectations. One of the lasting components of the considerations is the appropriate-level acquisition of the majority or national language. While examining the “difficult decisions” of mixed marriages, the author has reasonable grounds to suppose that in the majority of the ethnically homogeneous marriages, parents choose schools more easily for their children. The experience of the elementary school of Galanta (Galánta) shows that choosing between local, urban, small and central schools is often as difficult as selecting the language of instruction (Árendás, 2012).

In addition to that, based on the information from Galanta (Galánta), it is worth pointing out that in the bilingual small town milieu, relatively flexible and quickly changing social patterns are in place that put school choice in an entirely different context, for instance, during times of economic prosperity or crisis.

*Competitiveness and the creating of identity in the elementary school of Horné Saliby (Felsőszeli)*

Among the Hungarian-language nine grade big schools of the district of Galanta (Galánta), the István Széchenyi Elementary School of Horné Saliby (Felsőszeli) is undoubtedly one of the most successful



ones. In the upper elementary section of the school that has a Hungarian-language kindergarten as well, there is also a place for the neighbouring children of Dolné Saliby (Alsószele). The schools of the two villages have a rich past since Lutheran and Catholic schools operated here side by side until 1945 under the leadership of excellent and nationally acclaimed teachers (Boros, 2005). The parallel education has been conducted in Hungarian and Slovak since 1949. In the interviews with the headmistress and the teachers of the school and within the framework of a focus group interview with seventh graders, we gathered some interesting information on the coordination of educational work ensuring the school's competitiveness and the functions creating a Hungarian identity. The school-age classes in both towns have shrunk dramatically: instead of the former 80-90 pupil classes, in 2012, 8 pupils were enrolled in first grade in Dolné Saliby (Alsószele) and 23 in Horné Saliby (Felsőzele).

For the successful headmistress of the school who stepped down just while we were visiting, it was difficult to face the demographic plunge and its consequences: for the first time, the number of pupils fell below 200 in the 2011-2012 academic year. This represents a more than 50% drop compared to the golden age. In the third minute of the interview, after praising the renowned, active, and innovative teaching staff, she moved on to talk about one of the strengths of the school: its identity creating and strengthening activity based on the conscious promotion of Hungarian cultural and historical traditions.

*"What values we represent is very important in our school, and it is also part of our teaching programme. In one respect, we build on traditions. It has always been important here that the Hungarian identity of the children should be sufficiently thorough to be familiar with the local values. Therefore, we say that – and not because of a trend – we preserve and communicate values. All of our work, within or without the frame of education, follows and focuses on this. Teachers pass on their creative work and writing talent to the children. The pupils are involved in a lot of competitions of penmanship, they write really nice compositions that are awarded even on an international level."*

The school has been in the same building as the Slovak-language elementary school for more than 50 years, but professionally they work almost completely separately. There is no exchange between

the teaching staffs and the pupils; apart from the shared operating costs, the two schools are completely autonomous. Their first concerted action was within the framework of an EU call for tenders. They succeeded in obtaining funding, which set the foundations for regular common work. Despite the coexistence going back several decades, the experiences gained from this cooperation represented a real novelty for the teachers of both schools.

*“We wrote and realised the bid together. So, this means that we worked on the educational development of biology; we prepared methodological books, textbooks, and electronic teaching material. There was a team comprised of the teachers of our school – four from the Hungarian school and four from the Slovak one – that prepared documents in Hungarian. The management was also common. Well, we had monthly meetings, what’s more, people writing the books were in daily contact with each other. And yes, everybody agreed that the work was really good because if there is a working process, then during this process, certain compromises have to be made, so we operate by compromising and that’s the way a team functions.”*

The school works like a real elite school: pupils continuously and successfully participate in Slovakian and Hungarian competitions individually and in teams as well. All this is accompanied by appropriate competition and bidding work. Revenues generated from these additional and uncertain sources are used, among others, to reward the most successful pupils. The headmistress considers that relations are appropriate with parents of kindergarteners who ensure replacement for the school. The school plays an active, local, and social role; they get in touch with the parents of future first graders early on, and they capitalise on every enrolment campaign, assistance, and networking opportunity.

It was revealed by the teacher interviews that the Hungarian- and Slovak-language schools under one roof are characterised by a unique linguistic symmetry. While children of Hungarian mother tongue learn the bases of the Slovak language with a considerable mental effort, in the Slovak school, half of the pupils come from families where Hungarian is a means of communication of equal rank. This one-sided “symmetry” of bilingualism makes its influence felt in the Hungarian-like and –dominated two towns. The number of mixed

marriages is on the rise and the ratio of kindergarten registrations for the two classes is influenced by a quota established in the same manner:

*“... the enrolment period has just finished and we are a kindergarten with two groups. We have 46 children in the groups, Slovak is very dominant in our village, despite the fact that there was a time when there were fewer Slovaks, and now we are at the point of a 50-50 ratio and many move here. They sell their house, so people from Bratislava (Pozsony) buy them, and then come the mixed marriages. (...) There are parents who account for this in several ways... The village is big but still our relations are intimate. I know the parents; I am on good enough terms with them to talk about the reasons for their decision of enrolling their children in the Slovak kindergarten. And then they say things, the mum takes her own example. Look here, I didn't learn Hungarian and Slovak properly, I had problems during my career because of the deficiency of my Slovak. Or take the elder child, sometimes, she takes the example of the older kid that went to a Hungarian kindergarten. He didn't learn the language properly and moved away from the village.”*

During the focus group interview with seventh graders, pupils were proud of both the good reputation of their school and the preparation of their teachers that offered them a lot of advantages. At the same time, they quite naturally missed the various supplementary programmes appropriate for their own spheres of interest in the place from which there are usually historical and traditional activities aimed at identity creation during field trips. Participants gave proof of their developed sense of justice when they criticised the selfish behaviour of some of their teachers and reproached them for the insufficient enforcement of pupils' rights.

The conversation echoing criticism also proves that the demanding and competitiveness of the school builds sovereign characters that notice and distinguish quite early the useful and the unnecessary, the fake and genuine values.

In two towns with an ethnic background that became unstable not quite unexpectedly, the István Széchenyi Elementary School and Kindergarten of Horné Saliby (Felsőszeli) are both identity creating and educational institutions. Their achievements, successes and

initiative demonstrates that the schools of big villages in Matušova zem (Mátyusföld) may survive the present demographic plunge that promises to be prolonged, as well as the assimilation tendency gaining ground. People moving out from Bratislava (Pozsony) that is 50 kilometres away and the majority workers of the Samsung plant who are scattered around the district of Galanta (Galánta) indicate in any case that they have to continuously face new challenges and trials in a district clinging to the Funeral Sermon (*also title of earliest literary text in the Hungarian language from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, trans.*) used in the neighbouring Diakovce (Deáki) settlement and the intellectual tradition of Zoltán Kodály.

#### **4. The situation of the Hungarian education in Podzoborie (Zoboralja)**

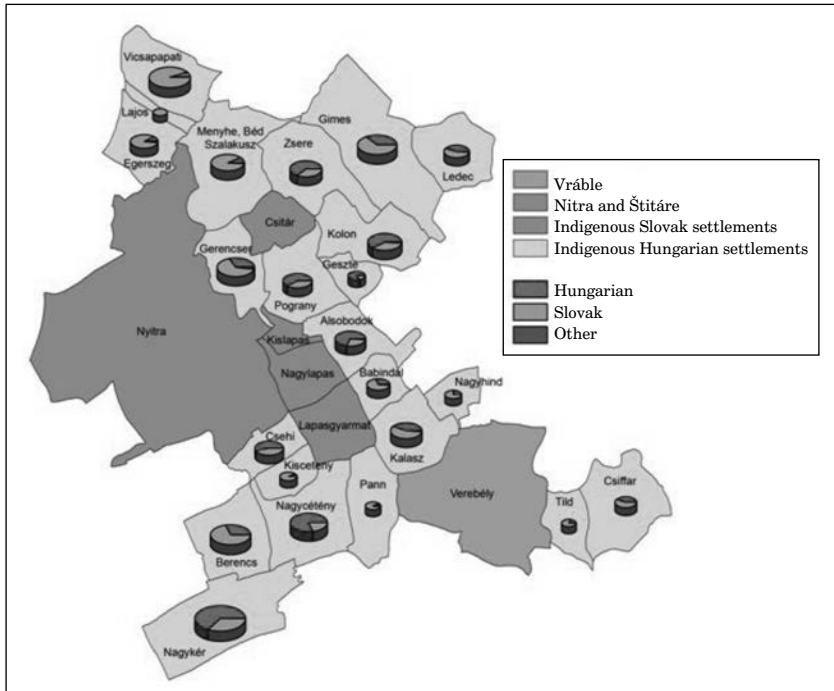
Besides the big cities in Slovakia (Bratislava [Pozsony], Košice [Kassa]), the largest Slovakian Hungarian community lives sporadically in towns inhabited by Hungarians in the district of Nitra (Nyitra), in Podzoborie (Zoboralja). We chose this region as the third site for our study since it is here that the number of children attending Hungarian schools has fallen most significantly in recent years. According to the 2001 census data, 10,956 persons considering themselves of Hungarian ethnicity lived in the district of Nitra (Nyitra), which represented 6.7% of the population. The 2011 census data indicate an 18.16% decrease during the last decade: 9,076 persons, that is 5.7% of the population claimed to be of Hungarian ethnicity in the district.

The available demographic data and the registration indices provide us with information about the constantly decreasing number of Hungarians in Podzoborie (Zoboralja) and children attending Hungarian schools. “Conforming” to the European wave of population decrease, the negative demographic indices are the main explanation to the dwindling number of children in this case as well. In the diaspora setting, this phenomenon is exacerbated by the strong willingness to assimilate (Bodó, 2003). Earlier studies prove that finishing school in the majority language leads to losing one’s ethnic identity. However, identity loss is already tantamount to assimilation (Lamp, 2009.41.). The choice of a Slovak-language school that could

trigger the process of assimilation is in the hands of parents since, in compliance with the effective laws of Slovakia, parents are free to choose any school for their children. The question is what aspects parents take into consideration when making a decision.

**Figure 1.**

*The ethnic ratio in the district of Nitra (Nyitra) based on the 2001 census data*



Source: <http://korkep.sk/cikkek/egyebek/2010/09/28/8042-ketnyelvuseg-helyzete-zoboraljan>

Attending kindergarten is not obligatory before the 10-year compulsory schooling; more than 90% of kindergarten-aged (3-6-year-old) children go to this institution on a national level. In Podzoborie (Zoboralja), bilingual education can be excluded as one of the reasons behind the choice of kindergarten since there is no independent Hungarian-language kindergarten and they have Hungarian-language sessions in institutions attended by children of Hungarian mother tongue. In terms of the language of instruction, if the reasons underlying the choice of school or kindergarten were

identical, there would be no Hungarian-language elementary school in the studied area any more. Some parents do not automatically choose a Slovak-language school for their children finishing a Slovak-language kindergarten.

*The Hungarian-language school network of Podzoborie (Zoboralja)*  
In the district of Nitra (Nyitra), there are seven Hungarian-language schools in various towns inhabited by small Hungarian populations. Three of these schools admit pupils from the first to the ninth grade, the other four function as lower elementary (grades 1-4) schools. The nine grade elementary school of Pohranice (Pográny) is the only independent Hungarian-language elementary school in the district, the rest of the schools are managed together with the Slovak section by a common school administration.

**Table 1.**

*The Hungarian-language schools of the district of Nitra (Nyitra)*

| Town                        | Type of school | Number of pupils 2011/12 |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Dolné Obdokovce (Alsóbodok) | 1-4-year       | 6                        |
| Čechy (Csehi)               | 1-4-year       | 9                        |
| Jelenec (Gímes)             | 1-9-year       | 37                       |
| Kolíňany (Kolon)            | 1-4-year       | 14                       |
| Velký Cetín (Nagycétény)    | 1-9-year       | 71                       |
| Pohranice (Pográny)         | 1-9-year       | 60                       |
| Žirany (Zsére)              | 1-4-year       | 7                        |
| <b>Sum total</b>            |                | 210                      |

Source: www.uips.sk

In the district, there is only one bilingual kindergarten operating as a section of the similarly bilingual elementary school that was attended by 13 kindergarteners in the 2011/2012 academic year. In the other villages inhabited by Hungarians, Hungarian-speaking kindergarten teachers hold Hungarian-language sessions. According to one of the local civic leaders, there was an initiative at the beginning of the 1990's to establish a Hungarian-language kindergarten in the biggest Hungarian-language town, Velký Cetín (Nagycétény). However, parents did not support it arguing that their children learn Slovak in kindergarten and they will have Hungarian-language instruction in the school anyway.

*Aspects of school choice among Slovakian Hungarians*

The most recent empirical study on school choice strategies of Slovakia's Hungarians was carried out by the Focus Institute (Fókusz Intézet) in 2011; in fact, it has relevant data going back as far as 1996. Results of the study show that Hungarian-language instruction is losing ground against the majority language in several Hungarian blocks and dispersed clusters and, from the point of view of school choice, the cluster and dispersed distinction is no longer a determining factor (Dobos, 2011). Nevertheless, we believe to have found, while studying the habits of school choice of parents in Podzoborie (Zoboralja), some distinctive features that support arguments against mother-tongue education. Apart from the above-mentioned negative demographic indices, there are several other special factors to be considered in connection with the question of survival of Hungarians in Podzoborie (Zoboralja).

**Table 2.**

*The number of pupils of Hungarian ethnicity in the district of Nitra (Nyitra)*

| School year                | 2003/<br>2004 | 2004/<br>2005 | 2005/<br>2006 | 2006/<br>2007 | 2007/<br>2008 | 2008/<br>2009 | 2009/<br>2010 | 2010/<br>2011 | 2011/<br>2012 |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Number of Hungarian pupils | 550           | 501           | 452           | 412           | 377           | 350           | 325           | 314           | 302           |

We would like to highlight the most significant aspects regarding school choice. The number of pupils of Hungarian ethnicity attending a Slovak school is the highest in the district of Nitra (Nyitra), that is, it was 41 percent in the previous school year. The number of mixed marriages is on the rise nationwide, especially in this district, and as a consequence, the language of instruction of children born in mixed marriages is a question of compromise, but according to estimates, two thirds of them opt for a majority-language school. However, it is not only the school choice of parents living in mixed marriages that shows an increased tendency towards the majority-language school, but of parents in homogeneous Hungarian marriages as well. In Podzoborie (Zoboralja), 40 percent of children of parents living in a homogenous marriage attend a Hungarian-language elementary school, and this figure is half of the national average. The proximity of the city of Nitra (Nyitra) also negatively impacts Hungarian-language

small schools; children travelling to the city with their parents is a widespread phenomenon in the area and in this case due to the lack of Hungarian-language elementary school in Nitra (Nyitra), the language of instruction of the children can only be Slovak. The prestige of Hungarian keeps deteriorating, which has an adverse effect on identity. It is typical of dispersed populations that belonging to an ethnicity that is different from the majority one is regarded as a burden, and it became evident during the interviews as well.

*"It is a burden for her and she may have been victim of slander or atrocity because of being Hungarian."* (local civic leader)

*"... staying Hungarian feels kind of a burden for parents."*  
(a teacher in Velký Cetín [Nagycétény])

*"Being Hungarian is a hazard here in the region of Nitra (Nyitra)."*  
(a teacher in Jelenec [Gímes])

There is a sort of automatism guiding the school choice of certain parents. They follow their own example concerning the language of instruction of their children and, in some cases; this may mean choosing the same institution that they used to attend. This kind of automatism can be the decision of parents who attended a Hungarian-language school and live in a homogeneous Hungarian marriage. There were several examples to the generational school choice among our interviewees:

*"my father, his brothers, too, and everybody went to school here"*  
(seventh grader)

The reason most frequently voiced by parents for choosing a Hungarian school is that they want to have their children taught in Hungarian so that they would learn the language, the literature, the history in order to get to know their past. A parent who attended a Slovak-language school misses this knowledge from her own life, which is why she chose the Hungarian school for her children:

*"If my son becomes acquainted with Hungarian literature and culture, then he can go to that country, he can feel something for it. Otherwise, the latter disappears from Slovakian children even if their parents are Hungarian and grandpa and grandma also, but if children go to a Slovak school, this disappears from them like it disappeared from me; who will talk to me about Petőfi or ... when that name didn't mean anything to me, they didn't teach us about Hungarian writers, maybe on purpose ..."* (a parent from Dolné Obdokovce [Alsóbodok])



A teacher working in a bilingual school chose a Hungarian school for her child despite the fact that she used to go to a Slovak one. Knowing the Slovak curriculum, she came to the conclusion that *"the Slovakian curriculum is anti-Hungarian"*, so her child would not only be unable to learn Hungarian literature and history in a Slovak school but even Hungarian history would not be taught in an objective manner.

In terms of school choice, practical reasons like proximity to the school were not given in this area. There is also a Slovak-language school in the majority of the villages inhabited by Hungarians in Podzoborie (Zoboralja) while in most cases, the Hungarian ones have only 1-4 classes. With the exception of three villages where there is a nine-grade Hungarian section, pupils living in the rest of the villages have to commute after finishing the lower elementary section.

Parents and pupils had a positive view of the atmosphere of intimacy of the schools. As these schools are attended by a low number of children, pupils feel the attention of their teachers that, according to them, does not exist in schools with a greater number of children. This atmosphere of intimacy is, of course, the consequence of the reduction in the number of pupils; this is coupled with the merging of classes in 1-4-grade schools in most cases because they can only survive in this form.

Nobody mentioned Hungarian educational assistance as a motivating factor when choosing the Hungarian school. Answering the question whether parents are motivated by this aid, one of the parents said that the parents of a child from a mixed marriage chose the Hungarian school because of the aid. The rest of the parents said that this doesn't play a decisive role when choosing a school.

*"I think this is one part of the mosaic. This is not the main consideration."* (local civic leader)

*"No, this is no longer a motivating factor. If they get it, they accept it, but they don't expect to get I don't know how much money."* (a teacher in Jelenec [Gímes])

*The aspect of choosing a Slovak-language school*

One of the objectives of our study is to shed light on the aspects that form the basis of the decision of parents in favour of a Slovak-language school. We could say that we did not address the immediate target group since our present study focused on Hungarian-language

schools. We questioned our interviewees as external observers because the vast majority of them and their children had Hungarian-language schooling. The attitude of the external observer can be felt in the interviews since besides the opinion of the parents who chose the Slovak-language school, they add their own counter-arguments every time. The interviewees said that the most common reason for choosing a Slovak-language school for their children was success. They consider finishing the Slovak-language elementary school as a means to succeed at further studies, on the job market and in every walk of life.

*“what influences parents, well, a lot of things, first of all, it is foolishness, what they say in the neighbourhood, this success ... once they were saying this and it is like a bad commercial, it is hard to explain that the opposite is good that not only children who attended Slovak schools can succeed, there are many examples that pupils learning in their mother tongue were a lot more successful during that time. Saying that is the most simple.” (local civic leader)*

Hearing this argument, the interviewees list many counter-examples. Parents take examples from their own environment concerning the fact that a child who attended a Slovak school did not have a more successful career in a given case than his peer attending Hungarian school. Headmasters and teachers boast their top pupils who graduated from them, pointing out that pupils who went to Hungarian schools can have a fruitful career path and that success does not depend on the language of the school. Schools publish their achievements at inter-school competitions in publications and yearbooks so that they can demonstrate the success of the school to parents who will enrol their children in the future. A headmaster of a school states, however, that despite the school being under common Slovak-Hungarian headmastership, the Hungarian section participates much more actively in inter-school competitions.

*“they say that parents want the school to be good and nice ... it is absolutely not the Hungarian section that represents 80 percent of the results of the school” (a teacher in Jelenec [Gímes])*

Some parents say that the state language can be acquired on a proper level in Slovak-language schools. This standpoint, however, is considered a commonplace in the dispersed settlements where the

language of the environment is basically Slovak. In public offices, at the doctor's or in the shops, one can achieve one's goal by using almost only the majority language. As a result, people living here do not really learn Slovak in school but in everyday life as a language of their environment. The Hungarian schools of the district of Nitra (Nyitra) do outstandingly in Slovak-language competitions. One teacher gives her opinion on the level of the language skills of her pupils, namely, in a national assessment test,

*"... we passed the Monitor with 80 percent for the Slovak language"*  
(a teacher in Jelenec [Gímes])

During the focus group interview of pupils, we once again discovered that they spoke Slovak well. There was one exception who admittedly does not speak the language well since he does not have any Slovak friends. He does not seek the company of his Slovak peers since he is from a family with several children so his playmates are his brothers and sisters. He probably does not even make an effort to learn Slovak on a higher level since he knows already as a seventh grader that he would like to pursue his secondary school studies in Hungary.

Numerous factors are at play when choosing a school for a child, and as it turned out, the constraint to meet expectations at work can also be a decisive factor. The interviewees told stories in connection with the fact that some do not openly admit at work that they are Hungarian, so, enrolling the child in a Hungarian school would be even more uncomfortable for them.

*"they cannot know that I'm Hungarian, let alone the fact that my child goes to a Hungarian school ..."* (a teacher in Jelenec [Gímes])

Thus, among parents working with majority nationals, the conformist attitude and conformity to the majority pushes them towards choosing a Slovak-language school. Similarly, the majority-language environment and friends can affect parents and even children. It is possible that the child decides which school he wants to attend and, having Slovak friends, he decides in favour of the majority-language school. A teacher relates a counterexample in connection with this case: a child from a mixed marriage, even though his brother attends a Slovak school, will go to a Hungarian school because of his Hungarian-language friend.

The language of education of children born in Hungarian-Slovak mixed marriages is a particularly important question in the dispersed

communities since there, the number of mixed marriages compared to Hungarian cluster settlements is considerably higher. The results of previous empirical studies show that the child of a mother of Slovak mother tongue is more likely to attend a Slovak-language school than the child of a mother of Hungarian mother tongue. Our respondents came from different background situations. In the experience of one of the teachers, the language of education of the child in a mixed marriage will be determined by the dominating parent in the marriage.

*Survival strategy in Podzoborie (Zoboralja)*

Several civic initiatives were realised after the political changeover for the preservation of the Hungarians of Podzoborie (Zoboralja). Parents argue for choosing the Slovak school saying that there is no Hungarian-language secondary school for their children in the neighbourhood, therefore, they select a Slovak-language school in order to facilitate further study. The Hungarian section of the secondary school of Nitra (Nyitra) was closed down in 1978 and since then, there has been no Hungarian-language secondary school in the district. While trying to find a solution for this problem, an entrepreneur in Dolné Obdokovce (Alsóbodok) founded a private vocational secondary school in his village, which is the only Hungarian-language secondary school in the district of Nitra (Nyitra). The founder and owner of the Hungarian-language Private Vocational Secondary School in Dolné Obdokovce (Alsóbodok) founded in 2000 does not believe in miracles but he is hopeful:

*“that the initiative will bear fruit after years ... we are in the 24<sup>th</sup> hour, otherwise we will disappear.”*

Hungarian parents living in towns where there is no Hungarian school often choose the local Slovak school for their children due to reasons of comfort or money. After closing the Hungarian section of the school of Klasov (Kálaz) (1984), the locals opted for the same solution. Ten years after the closing of the school, a school bus service was launched mainly with civic support that transports pupils from Klasov (Kálaz) to the Hungarian-language school of the nearest settlement of Velký Cetín (Nagycétény).

The interviews revealed that the Hungarian identity of Hungarians in Podzoborie (Zoboralja) is weakening and they attribute less

and less importance to the preservation of the Hungarian language and culture. Consequently, they do not feel the significance of Hungarian-language schooling.

*“... that we have to legitimise Hungarian, use it bravely, organise big programmes and represent it visually as well.” (local civic leader)*

*“Hungarians here have to be made more visible, we have to organise programmes...” (a teacher in Jelenec [Gímes])*

The quotes above point to the fact that Hungarian identity can be enhanced among people living here by organising social events since this is the arena in which Hungarian language and culture can be displayed in its entirety and where Hungarians, who otherwise live their life in a multiple minority situation in dispersion, can feel like the majority.

*“... really, neighbouring villages continue to stay Hungarian near Kolíňany (Kolon), it has to survive in the school of Jelenec (Gímes) because of the old and strong village and traditions and folk traditions. So I think it also depends on how traditional the village is.” (a teacher in Jelenec [Gímes])*

*“Take Podzoborie (Zoboralja): it has a culture that shouldn’t be allowed to die...” (a teacher in Jelenec [Gímes])*

Apart from preserving traditions and the programmes organised around them, the practice of religion in the mother tongue should be ensured as well since Hungarians in Podzoborie (Zoboralja) form a devout Catholic community. One of the local civic leaders also emphasizes the importance of the conscious organisation of church life:

*“We have to make sure that the cantor is Hungarian, and the sacristan is Hungarian. If there is a nativity play, we have to be active and then we deprive Slovaks from being there because if we leave then they will immediately fill the void.”*

To sum it up, we can say that for Hungarians living in dispersed communities, the condition for preserving the Hungarian-language education is assuring the use of Hungarian as widely as possible. Taking into account that at the workplace, in the office and the shops, the language of the environment of Hungarians is the majority Slovak language, education in the mother tongue can only be motivating if the community lives its church life and does its leisure activities in Hungarian. According to a thesis formulated by linguists as

well, using a language as widely as possible increases its chances of survival. However, several factors are needed to achieve this, especially the increase of the prestige of the language. (Péntek, 2002)

What the statements of the interviewees reveal is that they made an emotional decision when choosing a Hungarian school for their children. They did not consider the quality of the school or the professionalism of teachers. Parents considered the low number of pupils in the studied schools as a qualitative advantage compared to the Slovak-language schools. In their view, their children receive more attention here, and consequently, teachers can both instruct and educate children.

## Conclusions

Five groups can be distinguished concerning the factors influencing the choice of Hungarian-language and partly Slovak-language schools in the micro regions of Gemer (Gömör), Matušova zem (Mátyusföld), and Podzoborie (Zoborálja) that we studied.

1. These factors influence the confident, problem-free and almost automatic “easy decisions” of ethnically (linguistic and cultural and identity factors) homogeneous families. In mixed marriages, they appear in the form of arguments and counter-arguments when there are temporary and hybrid forms of identity. The dominance of the Hungarian mother tongue is an obvious starting point for the majority of people belonging to Slovakia’s Hungarian community, even today, in the 5-6<sup>th</sup> generation of minority existence. At the same time, significantly different practices have developed for learning the Slovak language and acquiring a balanced and good quality bilingualism. The practices vary from trying out different intensive language teaching methods through alternating the Slovak-language kindergarten and the Hungarian-language school training, to opting for a Slovak school. The various success and family strategies and expectations have a fundamental influence on the seemingly straightforward ethnic decisions.

2. We saw the primary importance of family patterns in every school, in all three historical regions. The language use within the homogeneous Hungarian or mixed marriages, the parents’ experi-

ences with school, the linguistic and cultural models established within the family and among relatives and relevant experiences all play a fairly important role in the preparation and (subsequent) justification of school choice. The sensitivity of grandparents and the judgement of relatives could play a seemingly hidden but all the more important consideration when making a decision.

3. In the schools examined and differing from one another in many respects, we revealed a wide range of factors of motivation and environmental socialisation. The local ethnic context (the decreasing number of those choosing a Hungarian school in settlements of Slovak majority; the (non)-acceptance of the local Hungarian population regarding the absence of the Hungarian school; the acceptance or rejection of studying together with the Roma) belongs to the same category as the effect of social circumstances that can restrict or exploit possibilities.

4. The designers of the programmes that aim to influence school choice often forget about the importance of institutional factors. Yet, the equipment of schools, the accessibility of local, small town and district schools, the costs and inconveniences of travel and, especially, the quality of education can shape the trend in school choice in a given town in many cases for years or decades to come. Parents take more and more factors into consideration like the number of teachers, their local attachment, popularity and prestige that – especially in a village environment – this can determine family decisions.

5. In every school, we saw family strategies influencing the school choice of Slovakia's Hungarians. Linguistic, ethnic and from time to time, political "ideologies" evidently put "the easier success of the child" in the limelight. This quickly spreading ideological system of reasoning is often difficult to interpret but is still very effective and easily transferable to future generations. It highlights one of the most problematic sets of factors going against Hungarian school choice; the linguistic policy situation in Southern Slovakia that lacks fundamental balance; the asymmetric relation between the two languages; and the negative effect of assimilative political practices.

*Translated by Judit Pethő-Szirmai*

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*Viktória Ferenc*

## **School choice in Subcarpathia – the case of Beregszász [Berehovo]<sup>1</sup>**

On the basis of a qualitative research in this study I try to identify school selection strategies and motivations of Subcarpathian Hungarian parents. Former research on this topic approached school choice mainly from linguistic and ethnic perspective (in other words they dealt with the decision between schools taught in the minority or in the majority language). The aim of my research was to find additional pragmatic and practical factors, which play a role in parental decisions. The research was carried out in a settlement (Berehovo/Beregszász) where Hungarians live in a cluster. All together 16 interviews were made and analysed. My findings show that besides the language of instruction of the school, the ratio of Roma pupils in the class, the distance of the school from the children's home, teachers' personality and family traditions all had effects on school choice.

School choice is a moment of special importance for parents and their children, because schools serve not only knowledge transmission, but also general socialization. Growing up in appropriate circumstances, surrounded by good friends, being educated by well-qualified teachers are defining factors of the child's intellectual development. Educational establishments where the medium is a minority language get extra tasks to fulfill in comparison to general schooling. Through the hidden curricula minority schools became one of the scenes, where pupils' ethnic identity is developed. The school choice of parents belonging to minorities' ethno-linguistic considerations

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<sup>1</sup> Beregszász is the Hungarian name of the settlement, while Berehovo is the Ukrainian name. Today Berehovo is the official name of the town – because now it is part of Ukraine – however in the paper I prefer use the Hungarian version (Beregszász) because here we investigate school choice motivations from the perspective of Hungarian parents.

appeared as an additional factor, which complete the general ones and at the same time it is closely connected to them.

In this paper I identify the strategies and the background motivations of Subcarpathian Hungarian parents' school choice on the basis of available statistics, demographic data and qualitative interviews. My research aimed at identifying pragmatic/practical factors which play a role in parental decisions.

School choice motivations were examined in Beregszász, where Hungarians live in a coherent cluster. On the one hand my research hypotheses was that school choice motivations are not exclusively determined by linguistic aspects while on the other hand the presence of the institutional framework and the ratio of Hungarians in the given settlement does influence motivations of schools choice.

### Research location

Beregszász is the centre of the coherent territory inhabited by Hungarians in Subcarpathia. It has an extensive Hungarian language education system: several Hungarian-language kindergartens, Hungarian or Hungarian paired bilingual schools, a Hungarian high school and the only private Hungarian higher education establishment, the II. Rákóczi Ferenc Subcarpathian Hungarian College. According to the latest census (2001) the population of the town was 26.554, of which 12.785 people (48.1%) confessed to be ethnically Hungarian. 38.9 % of Beregszász is ethnically Ukrainian, 5.4% is Russian.<sup>2</sup> People, who represents the Roma ethnic group is significant as well, their number is 1695 (6.5 %). 99.2% of them speak Hungarian as their native language.

Within the Ukrainian education system there are Ukrainian-language schools, bilingual schools (with a parallel structure of classes in Ukrainian and classes in a minority language) and minority schools. The fact that in Beregszász several Hungarian, Ukrainian and bilingual schools take part in the competition for the Hungarian school-aged population, provides the opportunity to find motivations

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<sup>2</sup> Molnár, József. – István Molnár D. (2010) A kárpátaljai magyarság népességszám-rajzi viszonyai. In: Csernicskó, István ed. *Megtart a szó. Hasznosítható ismeretek a kárpátaljai magyar nyelvhasználatról*, 15–32. Budapest–Beregszász: MTA Magyar Tudományosság Külföldön Elnöki Bizottság – Hodinka Antal Intézet.

behind school choice in Hungarian-Hungarian relations, and in the thoroughly investigated minority-majority relations too.<sup>3</sup> In addition more and more pupils from the nearby villages appear in the town's education market due to manageable distances and normally functioning public transportation.

**Table 1.**

*Hungarian-language and bilingual schools in Beregszász<sup>4</sup>*

| Name of the school                     | Grades | Number of pupils<br>2011/12       | Language of<br>instruction           |
|--|--------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Secondary school №4                    | 1-11   | 450                               | Hungarian                            |
| Secondary school №3                    | 1-11   | 398<br>(from that Hungarian: 230) | Hungarian-Ukrainian<br>Bilingual     |
| Secondary school №10                   | 1-11   | 192<br>(from that Hungarian: 105) | Hungarian-Russian<br>Bilingual       |
| Primary school №7                      | 1-9    | 345                               | Hungarian-language<br>“Gypsy-school” |
| Primary school №6                      | 1-9    | 194                               | Hungarian                            |
| Primary school №9                      | 1-9    | 95                                | Hungarian                            |
| Hungarian High School<br>in Beregszász | 5-12   | 78                                | Hungarian                            |

<sup>3</sup> See for example: Balogh, Livia – Eleonóra, Molnár (2008) Az államnyelv elsajátításának ára a nemzeti identitás feladása? Вісник Прикарпатського університету. Педагогіка. Випуск XVII–XVIII. 10–19; Csernicskó, István (2009a) Az ukrainai oktatáspolitikai a nyelvi asszimiláció szolgálatában. Korunk 2009/február, 33–40; Ferenc, Viktória (2009) Kárpátaljai magyar diákok az ukrainai emelt szintű érettségi útvesztőiben. In: Kötél, Emőke ed. PhD-konferencia. A Tudomány Napja tiszteletére rendezett konferencia tanulmányaiból. Balassi Intézet Márton Áron Szakkollégium, Budapest, 199–214; Gazdag, Vilmos (2010) Az anyanyelv használati körének módosulásai az ukrán tannyelvű iskolába járó magyar anyanyelvű gyermekek körében. In: Kötél, Emőke – Zsuzsanna, Mészárosné Lampl eds. Határhelyzetek IV. Balassi Intézet Márton Áron Szakkollégium. Budapest; Molnár, Anita (2009) Tannyelv és nemzeti identitás kapcsolta egy 2006-os felmérés tükrében. In: Karmacs, Zoltán – Anita Márkú eds., Nyelv, identitás és nevelés a XXI. században. Ungvár, Poli Print. 117–122; Séra, Magdolna (2009) Az iskolai tannyelv-választás szerepe a kárpátaljai magyar kisebbség jövője és megmaradása szempontjából. In: Kötél, Emőke – László Szarka eds. Határhelyzetek II. Kultúra – Oktatás – Nyelv – Politika. Balassi Intézet Márton Áron Szakkollégium. Budapest, 241–267.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Educational Authority of the town of Beregszász (personal communication)

In Beregszász all together six Hungarian-language schools and a Hungarian High School are competing to enroll Hungarian children (see *Table 1.*) The mentioned high school is specialised in talent guidance, it has an entrance examination, and its scope extends to the whole administrative region of Beregszász.

During our fieldwork four of the above-mentioned Hungarian schools were observed, namely the secondary schools №4 and №3, and primary schools №6 and №7. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with headmasters, teachers of both lower and upper school sections, parents, and focus group discussions with pupils of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. All together 13 individual interviews and 3 focus group discussions took place in this research locality. Interviews were in the Hungarian language.<sup>5</sup>

Interviews were recorded, and the records generated in this way were taped. Finally the texts were coded in Atlas.ti interview analysing software. By coding we order labels/codes to certain citations according to the content of the citation. Citations with similar or the same meaning have received the same label. In this paper I focus on those codes and code families which contain the most citations, in other words we based our analysis on the dominant themes which appeared most frequently and could be supported by the most citations.

Analysing the individual interviews all together 163 thematic codes were set up. Focus group discussions with pupils of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade were coded separately, creating 130 different labels.

From the closely connected codes code families (network of codes) were organised. Here we make an attempt to analyse in depth the family *school choice motivations*, because the original aim of our research was to map out those motivation groups which play a significant role in children's school enrolment. On the one hand the issue of school choice can be differentiated according to different educational levels (kindergarten choice, school choice, university choice), while on the other hand the moment of school choice can be captured several times during the individuals' lifetime: besides their own school choice, the school choice of their husband/wife, or their chil-

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<sup>5</sup> Citations from the original interviews published in this paper are based on my own translation.

dren (if any) appeared in the interviews. It is an interesting aspect of the research that some of the teachers were parents at the same time, and in some cases parents were teachers, kindergarten-nurses, which add professional considerations to school choice as well.

### Some important trends in Hungarian-language education in Subcarpathia

Before analysing the interviews carried out in Beregszász, it is important to introduce briefly the most important trends which influence the educational situation, since the results of the research cannot be interpreted without them.

The ratio of people of Hungarian ethnicity in Subcarpathia has shown a downward trend in recent years, the main reasons of which are assimilation, low birth rate, and migration.<sup>6</sup>

Low birth rate is a significant problem throughout Ukraine, therefore the country has launched a vigorous campaign in support of child birth. The support system which (compared to the economic situation of Ukraine<sup>7</sup>) had been operating with considerable amounts since its very beginning. On 1st July 2012 it was raised further for the amount of financial assistance paid on the birth of children. The current assistance levels are summarised in *Table 2* (the amounts are also expressed in Hungarian Forints).

**Table 2.**

*Assistance paid on the birth of children in Ukraine<sup>8</sup>*

|   | Ukrainian Hryvna | Hungarian Forint |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| On the birth of a first child                     | 27 510           | 811 540          |
| On the birth of a second child                    | 55 020           | 1 623 090        |
| On the birth of a third and each successive child | 110 040          | 3 246 180        |

<sup>6</sup> Molnár D., István – József Molnár (2005) Kárpátalja népessége és magyarsága a népszámlálási és népmozgalmi adatok tükrében. Beregszász: Kárpátaljai Magyar Pedagógusszövetség Tankönyv- és Taneszköztanácsa, 27–31.

<sup>7</sup> For comparison: the minimum wage is 1102 Ukrainian Hryvna (32509 Hungarian Forint), the amount of the minimum pension is 844 Ukrainian Hryvna (24898 Hungarian Forint).

<sup>8</sup> Source: <http://karpatinfo.net/cikk/ukrajna/konnyebb-lelt-az-elet-7-hrivnyaval>

Towns and villages are over the demographic low point. In recent years the number of children has increased in every settlement, especially among the Hungarian-speaking Roma, which has led to an increased number of Roma pupils in Subcarpathian Hungarian-language schools.

Parallel to this a trend has developed of choosing a school in the majority language among pupils of Hungarian ethnicity. As a result, minority Hungarian-language education has started to weaken; its prestige has been decreasing. In fact, small schools in villages could survive, in many cases only because of the enrolment of Hungarian-speaking Roma pupils.

The Hungarian-language education system of the region, besides demographic characteristics, has also been influenced by the educational regulations of Ukraine. In 2008 the advanced level school-leaving examination in the Ukrainian language also became compulsory for school leavers of Hungarian-language school. As a result, the quality of the instruction of the Ukrainian language in Hungarian-language schools has become a crucial public question, since at the end of secondary school each student (regardless of the language of instruction of the school) has to take an exam in the Ukrainian language and literature under the same conditions as native Ukrainian speakers. This exam is the entry into higher educational institutions. *Table 3* illustrates that in the first two years the exam meant great difficulty for the students of Hungarian-language schools in Subcarpathia.

**Table 3.**

*The school leaving and entrance exam in Ukrainian language and literature on a country-wide level and among Subcarpathian Hungarians<sup>9</sup>*

| Academic year  | 2007/2008 | 2008/2009 |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Failure rate   | 8.38 %    | 9 %       |
| Failure rate of students of Subcarpathian Hungarian-language schools | 29.58 %   | 44 %      |

<sup>9</sup> The table was constructed on the basis of the following sources: Ferenc, Viktória (2010) A kisebbségi magyar felsőoktatás és nyelvi kihívásai a Kárpát-medencében: problémák és feladatok. REGIO, 2010/3, 59–89; Beregszászi, Anikó – István Csernicskó (2010) Направление языковой политики украины как фактор этнических и языковых конфликтов. In: Виноградов, В. – В. Михальченко eds.: Language and Society in present-day Russia and other countries, 245–249. Москва: Институт языкознания РАН – Научно-исследовательский центр понационально-языковымотношениям.

In 2008, for instance, the 8.38% of students failed to pass the exam on a country-wide level, while among students of Hungarian-language schools this rate was 29.58% (three and a half times more!), whilst in other subjects (which students could take in their mother tongue) there was no significant difference between students of Hungarian-language schools and those of other schools. In 2009 the rate of students who failed to pass the exam was 9% on a country-wide level. Out of Subcarpathian Hungarian students only 28% (535 students) participated in the exam, but almost every second person failed (44%).

The decreasing number of students in Hungarian schools can be partly explained by the phenomenon of structural dropout, the extent of which is rather high at the transitions from 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade and from 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The dropout rate rises with educational levels, since almost half of the pupils of Hungarian-language classes do not reach the secondary school level.<sup>10</sup>

The results of the school-leaving exams as well as other sociolinguistic and sociological studies prove that Subcarpathian Hungarians have a very low competence in the state language.<sup>11</sup> As a result of the inadequate teaching of the Ukrainian language in Hungarian-language schools, more and more parents choose a Ukrainian-language school for their children in order to help their language learning. *Table 4* illustrates that the number of pupils in Hungarian schools has shown a downward trend in the recent period which, on

<sup>10</sup> The reasons for the dropout, in the lack of referential studies, can only be presumed. According to Papp (2010: 490) “Hungarian-language instruction, presumably because of the lack of pedagogical preparedness, is not able to keep children in the system. In lower classes the unsuccessful educational integration of Subcarpathian Romas of Hungarian mother tongue and of disadvantaged children may also contribute to this phenomenon. Parallel to this, a further explanation can be the attitude of the Ukrainian educational policy which has an obvious anti-minority character, trying to decrease the prestige of minority-education by creating a legal environment which forces both parents and children – especially in recent years – to choose the Ukrainian-language school.” Papp, Z. Attila (2010) A kárpátaljai magyar nyelvű oktatás rendszere és néhány aktuális kihívása 2009-ben. In: Fedinec, Csilla – Vehes Mikola eds. Kárpátalja 1919–2009: történelem, politika, kultúra, 480–498. Budapest: Argumentum–MTA Etnikai-nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézete.

<sup>11</sup> See: Csernicskó 2009a, Ferenc 2010, Papp Z., Attila – Valér Veres eds. (2007) Kárpát Panel 2007. A Kárpát-medencei magyarok társadalmi helyzete és perspektívái. Budapest: MTA Kisebbségkutató Intézet.

the one hand, is the consequence of the language policy of Ukraine, and on the other hand, is the result of the demographic downturn.

**Table 4.**

*School enrolment in Hungarian-language schools in Subcarpathia<sup>12</sup>*

| Academic year                  | 2003/<br>2004 | 2004/<br>2005 | 2005/<br>2006 | 2006/<br>2007 | 2007/<br>2008 | 2008/<br>2009 | 2009/<br>2010 | 2010/<br>2011 |
|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Pupils enrolled in first class | 2160          | 2311          | 1647          | 1499          | 1495          | 1321          | 1385          | 1429          |
| The total number of pupils     | 22200         | 19600         | 18948         | 18136         | 17366         | 16407         | 15596         | 15126         |

### **The motivational factors of school choice in Beregszász**

On the basis of the interviews carried out in Beregszász the following motivational subgroups can be distinguished. These groups were established by the categorisation of factors influencing school choice as identified by the interviews.

1. Decision based on nationality and language.
2. Decision based on the social composition of the class.
3. Decision based on the person of the teacher.
4. Decision based on traditions of family members and friends.
5. Decision based on the geographical location of the school and on other practical factors.
6. Decision based on the quality of education and on the success rate of students who continue their studies.

With the exception of the first group, decision based on nationality and language (which illustrates the choice between Hungarian- and Ukrainian-language schools), the other subgroups can also be used for the analysis of school choice in relation to Hungarian schools.

#### **1. Decision based on nationality and language**

Literature on school choice considering both Subcarpathia and other regions in the neighbouring countries pays remarkable attention to the choice between minority- and majority-language schools. The function of minority-language schools to strengthen national iden-

<sup>12</sup> The table was constructed partly on the basis of Papp 2010.



tity is indisputably important, and is not doubted by Hungarian parents. Our interviewees, recalling the moment of their own enrolment in school or that of their children, emphasised that to choose a Hungarian-language school is still the most obvious and most natural solution among Hungarians:

*“Other options are out of question, so, it’s obvious that a child must learn in his/her mother tongue.” (Teacher, secondary school №6)*

*“I don’t know, it was so natural for us since we are Hungarians (...) so it was so natural that the child should attend a Hungarian school, we did not even think about other solutions.” (Father of a child studying in school №4)*

Studying in one’s mother tongue, the atmosphere created by a Hungarian school, programs at a Hungarian school, the celebration of Hungarian national holidays all contribute to the formation and enhancement of the national identity of children. Hungarian-language schools in the educational market of Beregszász have this “minority plus” advantage in the competition for the school enrolment of children.

However, as a result of the poor opportunities of Hungarian higher education, the adoption of the compulsory Ukrainian school-leaving and entrance exam, the inefficient instruction of the state language in minority-language schools<sup>13</sup>, the tendency to choose a majority-language school has become rather strong for some years, the purpose of which is to foster the acquisition of Ukrainian.<sup>14</sup> A further factor is that the environment in the Hungarian town does not help the acquisition of the state language.

<sup>13</sup> Beregszászi–Csernicskó 2010, Csernicskó, István 2001 Az ukrán nyelv oktatásának problémái Kárpátalja magyar iskoláiban. *Nyelvünk és Kultúránk* 2001/2: 15–23; Csernicskó, István (2004) Egy megoldatlan probléma: az államnyelv oktatása a kárpátaljai magyar tananyelvű iskolákban. In: Huszti Ilona ed. *Idegennyelv-oktatás kisebbségi környezetben*, 113–123. Ungvár: PoliPrint – Kárpátaljai Magyar Tanárképző Főiskola; Csernicskó István 2010a: *Nyelv és nyelvpolitika a hosszú 20. században*. In: Fedinec, Csilla – Mikola, Vehes eds. *Kárpátalja 1919–2009*. MTA Etnikai- Nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézete. Argumentum, Budapest, 553–611.

<sup>14</sup> Csernicskó 2009a, Csernicskó István (2009b) Tények, adatok a kárpátaljai magyarok nyelvtudásáról. *Együtt* 2009/3, 70–77; Csernicskó 2010a; Ferenc 2009; Gazdag 2010, Molnár 2009; Séra 2009

*“This is our disadvantage, a disadvantage in quotation marks, that we live in a Hungarian town, Hungarians are in majority here, so it is difficult for them to learn it [the Ukrainian language].” (Teacher, secondary school №3)*

*“Because Beregszász is still Hungarian, more Hungarian. Everybody speaks Hungarian, the child is not forced to speak Ukrainian, for the Hungarian pupils there is no background, there is no linguistic environment to learn Ukrainian.” (Mother of a child studying in school №4)*

Therefore, neither the linguistic environment of the town, nor the family background helps language acquisition. The majority of parents learned Russian at school, only few of them speak Ukrainian, thus, they cannot help their children.

Regarding the inefficient, low level instruction of the state language, there is no significant difference between the Hungarian-language schools in Beregszász. There is no competition in this regard: there is no better or worse school, at least in a Hungarian-Hungarian relationship. As the teaching of the state language in Hungarian schools is still inadequate,<sup>15</sup> the choice of a Ukrainian-language school has become an alternative, where (according to lay assumptions) children can easily learn the language while studying, and, as a result, can be “more successful in life”. Although in our research we did not ask those parents who chose a majority-language school for their children, this subject is so much a part of the discourse about school choice that the interviews provided us with partial data about this question as well. Almost every interviewee had some direct or indirect experience concerning the question what happened

<sup>15</sup> In Subcarpathia numerous institutions and organisations have launched different programs the purpose of which was to improve the level of the instruction of the Ukrainian language in Hungarian-language schools. Beregszász has been especially active in this respect, since in January 2009, due to the initiative of the municipality of Beregszász, a workgroup was set up with an aim to develop programs, curricula, manuals, methodological booklets, teachers' books and visual aids. The purpose of these materials was to enhance the efficiency of the level of instruction of the Ukrainian language (as a state language) in Hungarian-language schools in Subcarpathia. The work was finished in August 2011. Its products: 25 different publications. However, the official permission by educational authorities to use the materials and to spread them beyond the borders of Beregszász has not been realised yet. See: Csernicskó István (2012) Az államnyelvoktatás javítására tett kísérletek Kárpátalján. *Alkalmazott Nyelvtudomány* 2012, 17-32.

to Hungarian children who started learning in a majority-language school. A frequently mentioned claim was that children could not move forward in learning and had problems with some serious subjects, since they did not possess that kind of knowledge (cognitive learning skills)<sup>16</sup> which made learning possible in a certain language.

*“Parents today think that – I also talked to parents who are teachers – »I don’t know the Ukrainians language but my child will learn it. « It is true, the child will be able to speak at a basic conversational level but it is not certain that s/he will be able to participate in higher education. If there is no sufficient financial background, s/he is not likely to take part in higher education by his/her own knowledge. Because a Hungarian child, at primary school, maybe, can cope with this difficulty, but in upper classes, when they start to learn geometry and history and other subjects, which are difficult even in Hungarian, then how to learn them in Ukrainian?”(Mother of a child studying in school №3)*

Among our interviewees who were either parents whose children study at Hungarian-language schools or were pedagogues who teach at Hungarian-language schools, there were some persons who survived the dilemma of the Ukrainian-Hungarian school choice.

*“By the time the school would have started; I took his documents and enrolled him in a Hungarian school. Because we were thinking about it at home very long, and at last I realised that though he would learn the Ukrainian language for sure, I was not sure that he would be able to learn the subjects well. I was certain that he would acquire the Ukrainian language, but I was sceptical regarding the other subjects. So, after that I thought that if he would go to a Hungarian school and he would understand what they teach him in his mother tongue, later, if he would want, he would be able to learn Ukrainian as well. So, according to the current curriculum, in the*

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<sup>16</sup> Jim Cummins (2008) proved the thesis according to which there are two grades in the acquisition levels of a language: basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic learning proficiency (CALP). According to this theory learning in a certain language is possible only if the student has already reached the level of the cognitive academic learning proficiency. Cummins, J (2008) BICS and CALP: Empirical and theoretical status of the distinction. In: Street, B & Hornberger, N. H. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, 2nd edition, Volume 2: Literacy. New York: Springer Science – Business Media LLC. 71–83.

*way they teach Ukrainian now, he is sure to learn it, if he will want to. Or, if I will have to give money for private lessons, I will have to pay for only one subject. Because my friends, who enrolled their child in a Ukrainian school, now pay for private lessons in Mathematics, and in Ukrainian. Here there is Hungarian language as well, in Ukrainian schools there isn't, so the child takes private lessons in Hungarian, too, because he didn't learn how to read. So, this was my decision, and I don't regret it because he is now among the best pupils in the class."* (Mother of a child studying in school №6)

Parents who pay attention to their children easily admit that the purpose of acquiring a language must not precede the main purpose of school, that of acquiring general knowledge. One of the interviewed parents, who is a teacher, told us how their child changed school and also the language of learning in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade:

*"The first two years did not mean a problem, until serious subjects came. So, when the Mathematics started to be explained in greater detail, using terminology, I noticed that the child was in complete darkness, he did not understand anything, so at the beginning of the third class I enrolled him in a Hungarian school."* (Elementary school teacher, school №6)

Children whose mother tongue is Hungarian, in Ukrainian-language schools lag behind not just in school subjects, but their language development may fall behind as well. Therefore, they will not be able to use neither the Ukrainian, nor the Hungarian language properly. Children of Hungarian mother tongue in majority-language schools, besides their bad results in studies, are judged not by their capabilities but by their language skills. Majority-language children and the teacher form a negative image of the children who cannot keep up with the tempo of learning; therefore, the self-esteem of Hungarian children may take a negative turn:

*"First, when they started learning in the Russian school, they didn't understand anything. For several months they didn't understand anything, they just wrote what they had to write. The teacher knew that the pupil was a silly child, how to say, (...) it was accepted, that the Hungarian children are silly."* (Upper class teacher, school №3)

Children in majority-language schools may suffer such psychological harm, that even the psychologist of the majority-language school advises the parents to take the child to a Hungarian school:

*“I talked to the parents. Now there are three children in school №6 who came back from Ukrainian-language schools. One of them was brought back to the second grade, the other child to the first grade, and the third child to the fourth grade. The psychologist advised them to bring back the children to Hungarian school, because they were so hurt emotionally, that they were unable to learn. They could learn to speak, but in school subjects they were lagging far behind.” (Upper class teacher, school №6)*

The subject of Ukrainian or Hungarian-language school choice is closely connected with the question of educational aid. Those families, who live in neighbouring countries and whose children attend a Hungarian-language school, are entitled to this annual aid. The purpose of Hungary by this aid, which is one of the most significant assistance provided for the Hungarian population of neighbouring countries, is to motivate people to choose a Hungarian school. In our research we also included questions concerning the impact of the educational aid on the choice of school and the usage of the sum of money.

*“The aid, well, parents are grateful for it, because it is really a great help. And it is seen, because children have new schoolbags and school supplies, but I don’t think the aid is really an influential factor while choosing between a Hungarian and a Ukrainian school. It has been about four years, probably, that parents have started to insist on Ukrainian schools so much, earlier it was not so. And then I asked them, why? And they told me that this way the child, at least, learns speaking Ukrainian. This is the main reason why they choose a Ukrainian school for their children and not the Hungarian one and the twenty thousand Forints.”(Upper class teacher, school №6)*

## **2. Decision based on the social composition of the class**

While analysing the interviews carried out in Beregszász, besides the strategy to choose a school on the basis of nationality and language, several other motivational factors were identified as well. Out of them the social factors of the learning community seemed to be the most significant one. While choosing a school, parents take into consideration who will be the classmates of their child, with whom will s/

he learn together?<sup>17</sup> There were parents who considered it extremely important to have so-called *pulling pupils* in the class, claiming that if there are many strong students in the class, it is a motivating factor for the child to learn more, and it may have a great impact on his/her further studies as well:

*“And another important aspect was what would be the classmates be like, so, whether there would be pulling children in the class”.  
(Father of a child studying in school №4)*

*“In a class there will be several talented children, children whose results are good. The child, perhaps, will learn more in such a class than in a class where someone has good marks only because there are no rivals in the class. So, this is an important aspect.”  
(Mother of a child studying in school №3)*

While analysing the social composition of the class, regarding the schools of Beregszász, it is also important to pay attention to the educational situation of Romas of Hungarian mother tongue. School №7 which is situated not far from the gypsy camp, is officially called Hungarian-language Elementary School №7, but its common name is the *gypsy school*.<sup>18</sup> Among the institutions primary school №7 represents a special case, being a dual minority school: in statistics it is indicated as a Hungarian-language school, however in the school only Roma pupils are enrolled, whose native language is Hungarian. The education of Roma children is concentrated mainly in this school, although well-off Roma parents often enroll their children in other Hungarian schools. Sixty-two Roma children study in other Hungarian-language classes in Beregszász.<sup>19</sup> The regulation of the enrolment of Roma pupils in other schools is quite chaotic, but it has neither theoretical, nor practical barriers, as it seems from the extract below:

<sup>17</sup> According to the international PISA estimations the discussion of the question of horizontal and vertical inclusion: see Papp's study, published in the present volume.

<sup>18</sup> The teachers and pupils of the “gypsy school” call the other Hungarian-language schools of the town Hungarian schools, though in official statistics such a distinction does not exist.

<sup>19</sup> Based on the data of the Educational Authority of the town of Beregszász (personal communication)

*“There was a problematic question: to not enroll Roma children in Hungarian-language schools of the town. There is a gypsy school down in the camp, it is school №7. That school was established specially for those children. But we also have Roma children in our school. When the elder child of the Roma parents studied in the school, the parents were told that the younger child should be enrolled, too, so they are enrolled only in the case of these families. But we cannot enroll other children because it causes problems, so, there are very few of them.”(Upper class teacher, school №6)*

*“There are children from those gypsy families who live not in the camp but in the neighbouring streets because these streets are inhabited mainly by them. They are the wealthy, rich gypsies, they have a car, and they enroll their children in schools №4, №6, and №9.”(Upper class teacher, school №7)*

Schools which have a low number of students show a tendency to be more receptive towards Roma students by whom they can increase their total number:

*“School №9 is out in Ardó, and they have a very low number of pupils (...). The number of births is too low to have enough children. In the 9<sup>th</sup> grade there were only 5 pupils. They said they would close the school because there were not enough children. The building was not used to capacity, so recently they have enrolled some Roma children, and the parents now are complaining about it. I’ve heard it from the parents.” (Upper class teacher, school №6)*

*“There is a problem with the number of children. In order to open a class, they try to bring children from school №7, and, well, it is common knowledge that that is the school of minority children. So it is a problem again, because for parents it is a worry in what kind of environment their child will study. These are the main problems, I think.”(Father of a child studying in school №4)*

As a result of the growing number of gypsies, Hungarian-language schools are frequently labelled and categorised as *a gypsy school*.<sup>20</sup> Due to the high rate of Roma pupils, Hungarian children leave and

<sup>20</sup> Choosing a Hungarian school leads to a division in gypsy communities as well. Those gypsies who choose the gypsy school, remain loyal to their own school and their community, while those who enroll their children in a Hungarian school, want to be different from their community, therefore, they start to follow the line of the process of becoming Hungarians („elmagyarosodás”).

change for *a more Hungarian school* (a school where there are more children of Hungarian ethnicity).<sup>21</sup>

### 3. Decision based on the person of the teacher

Particularly in the case of first class enrolment the person of the teacher seems to be a factor of special importance, who the parents entrust their child to.

*“They are asking me too, who will be the first class schoolmarm? And then no matter if it is a weaker school, but a good schoolmarm, the child may go there. Thus on the one side the person of the teacher rather, than the school itself, but the person of the teacher and the environment will influence the parents’ school choice.” (Father of a child studying in school №4)*

*“I knew the schoolmarm through parents whose children were just with her, I knew the schoolmarm through them. So I was really happy that this schoolmarm will be ours. She is teaching children so playfully, and the class, so it is a very strong class, the whole one, only one or two, maximum three of the pupils are a bit weaker, but in other ways the whole class is strong and it is rare. The previous four years the class was the same as well.” (Mother of a child studying in school №6)*

School-choice based on the person of the teacher is another aspect, concretely that the decision made by a teacher as a parent is taken as a sample to follow by the community:

*„So anyway, I thought about the school №6. On the one hand because there I know the teachers, I am there. And I think it would be a negative promotion of the school, if one of its own teachers would not choose it for her own child.” (Upper class teacher, school №6)*

*“When I became a teacher, both I and my husband were teachers, many of the teachers, Hungarian teachers enrolled their child to Russian schools, then later to Ukrainian ones. And this had a very negative effect on the people living in the villages, because we were employed in village schools and in the villages people looked up*

<sup>21</sup> Earlier school №7, the “gypsy school” was an average Hungarian school, but later, as a result of the dynamic settlement of the Roma and their intensive childbearing, it gradually became a gypsy school.



*to teachers, still look up to them nowadays. However if the teacher choose Ukrainian or Russian schools for their child, then its goes naturally, that we do the same, why a teacher is better than I am?!” (Upper class teacher, school №3)*

#### **4. Decision based on traditions of family members and friends**

Parents, who were satisfied with their old school, teachers, willingly bring their child to the same school. This positive feedback is important for the school as well.

*“There are a lot of parents whom I was the schoolmaster. And those are enrolling their child here.” (Headmaster, school №3)*

*“It happens plenty of times that a mother says that I was attended school №6, so I enroll my child there as well. Thus this positive experience, which she has got in the school remains and she enrolls her child in the same place, which she attended.” (Upper class teacher, school №6)*

It happens too that if the older sister/brother or cousin is going to a current school then the younger child will be taken there as well.

*“If the older child has already enrolled to the school №6, then the parents enroll the others to the same school as well, and it is like, like a family school. Thus it happens in every other class that children belong to the same family.” (Upper class teacher, school №6)*

#### **5. Decision based on the geographical location of the school and on other practical factors**

Practical factors could play a crucial role in school choice. The closeness of the school to the living place, broad-day service, lunch for free or school bus service could influence parental decisions. Among the listed factors the geographical position of the school appeared the most decisive (see the location of the schools in Map 1).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> At the time of school enrolment a child's parents should apply officially for enrolment. The most plausible solution is the choice of the closest school. However, if

Choosing the schools situated in the centre of the town (school №4 and №6) is only slightly affected by the distance, however in schools with peripheral location (school №10, №9 and №3) the number of enrolled town children is lower, and there is an attempt to substitute them with pupils from the neighbouring villages.

*„School №3 is a bit far from here, and the parents go in fear of their child, because it is outside in Búcsú, which is a separate part of the town, so it is like the child travels from a village. The only difference is that there is a school bus, so the problem is solved, therefore children can manage to study there.” (Upper class teacher, school №6)*

*“Q: Nowadays does school №10 count as an alternative?”*

*A: Not so, because it is a distant place too. No bus running in that direction, and you have to reach it on foot. Well, and it is about a 40 minute walk from school №6. Thus, it is far from here.” (Upper class teacher, school №6)*

The case of school №7 is special in that sense, because it is located very close to the centre of the town, however due to social reasons it does not participate in the competition of the local education market.

*„For local gypsies it is absolutely natural to enroll their children here, because they even called it gypsy school. They do not mention it as School №7. And then it is very near, it is only a couple of meters from the separate grange, which they called camp.” (Upper class teacher, school №7)*

The Roma camp in Beregszász is so extensive, that school №9 is also affected when it comes to the decision of the closest school. Those who live closer to that school, usually choose that one.

*“There was a railway line here some time ago, and this railway line got connected with the camp with school №9, so the railway is almost leading there, and those who live on that side of the camp, for those school №9 is closer to attend.” (Organising teacher, school №7)*

The number of pupils shuttling from villages to the Hungarian-language classes of Beregszász is 226. This is 16% of the total number

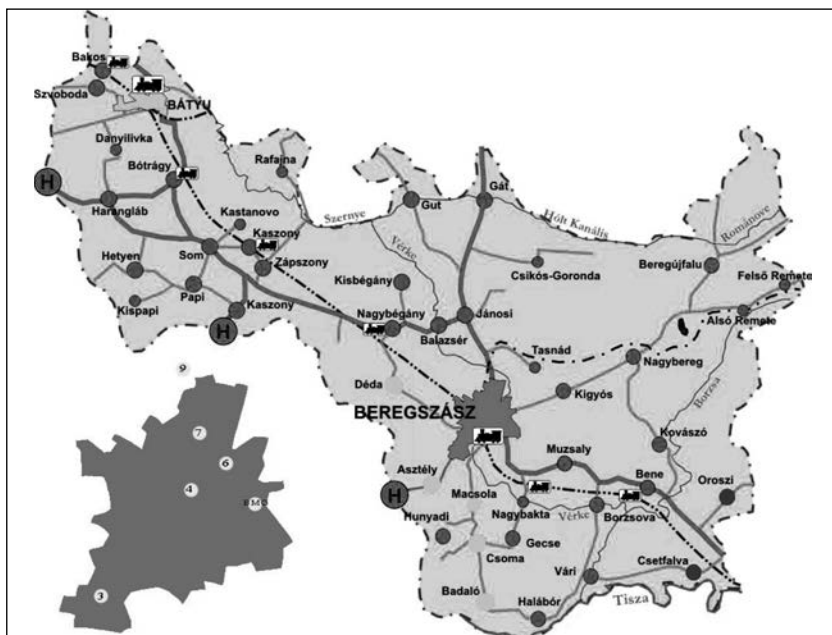
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parents decide another way in theory there is no obstacle to enroll the child in another school. A practical hitch can be encountered if classes are filled up with children living in the neighbourhood of the school. In such cases school headmasters can refuse enrolling the child from a distant location. Beyond that, admission depends on the strength of parental arguments.

of pupils (1419) studying in the Hungarian language.<sup>23</sup> Those who are shuttling from villages have to wake up earlier, if a school-bus is not provided, then parents have extra expenses in transporting their children, in addition a negative attitude towards village children is tangible in some of the town schools.

### Map 1.

*The location of schools inside Beregszász and the neighbouring villages*



Among schools under investigation school №3 appeared as the most significant from the point of enrolling pupils from the neighbouring villages. Due to the peripheral location of the school only 10% of the total number of pupils arrives from the centre or other parts of Beregszász. The place, where the school is situated was a separate village (called Búcsú) previously, and its attraction is strong for the neighbouring villages. The school launched a school bus service, which strongly supports the attraction of village pupils.

<sup>23</sup> Based on the data of Educational Authority of the town of Beregszász (personal communication)

In a 20 km zone of the neighbouring villages of Beregszász there are six Hungarian-language secondary schools and five primary schools, so in theory local Hungarian-language education would be possible (see *Table 5*). In spite of this a lot parents enroll their children in one of the schools in town.

In school №3 interviewees revealed that the actual circumstances in village schools is one of the important factors in school choice of parents living in villages. The high rate of gypsy children (see *Table 5*) could be determining in that respect, so the decision of that type belongs to the previously explained social category as well. The citation below refers to a village where the ratio of pupils belonging to Roma ethnicity is 47% in the local school.

*“There are pupils from Badaló. It happens that there are twenty pupils with Roma origin and four Hungarians in a class. And then the parents say that I would prefer another school. There is a bus, school bus service, no worry, no problem. And this is the reason why they choose our school, or school №4, or school №10.”*  
(Upper class teacher, school №3)

**Table 5.**

*Some characteristics of the neighbouring villages of Beregszász*

| Name of the village | Distance from Beregszász (km) | Level of local school | The ratio of Roma pupils in the local school (%)** |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Makkosjánosi        | 7                             | Secondary school      | 22   |
| Tiszacsoma*         | 9,9                           | Secondary school      | 0  |
| Nagymuzsaly*        | 9,1                           | Secondary school      | 0  |
| Gát                 | 14,7                          | Secondary school      | 25   |
| Nagybereg           | 10,1                          | Secondary school      | 9  |
| Vári                | 16,2                          | Secondary school      | 38   |
| Csetfalva*          | 20,9                          | Primary school        | 0  |
| Sárosoroszi*        | 20                            | Primary school        | 0  |
| Beregdéda*          | 5,3                           | Primary school        | 13   |
| Nagyborzsova        | 12,5                          | Primary school        | 0  |
| Badaló*             | 12,7                          | Primary school        | 47   |
| Asztély*            | 5,2                           | Elementary school     | 0  |
| Macsola*            | 7,1                           | -                     |  |

\* villages mentioned in the interviews

\*\* Data of the academic year 2008/09 Source: Braun László – Csernicskó István – Molnár József (2010:76) Magyar anyanyelvű cigányok (romák) Kárpátalján. Ungvár. PoliPrint.

## 6. Decision based on the quality of education and on the success rate of students who continue their studies

A kind of hierarchy can be discovered between schools in Beregszász. Interviewees' opinions concerning the place of different schools in this hierarchy are more or less coincidental. In that sense, the two best schools in the town are school №4 and №3.

*“In my mind among Hungarian-language schools in Beregszász the two best schools are school №4 and ours [school №3]. It is believed to be so. I mean it regarding the continuation of studies. Maybe school №4 is a bit better, because there are more pupils from the town centre whose parents take care more, however the difference is not big. For example in completions of subjects, our pupils win first, second and third places as well. So these two schools are the best among Hungarian-language schools. At least I think that these are the two best schools.” (Upper class teacher, school №3)*

For the title of the best school the Hungarian High school in Beregszász<sup>24</sup> is competing as well. In this respect secondary schools are at a disadvantage because the high school has a special focus on talent guidance, and the ratio of those who continue their studies is naturally higher in this institute. It goes together with the tendency that the most talented pupils of the Hungarian-language schools after graduation from the elementary school, move on to the high school.

*“After the fourth grade the Hungarian High School in Beregszász attracts our children. One of our eyes sheds tears, the other one laughs, because we are happy of them, we are proud of them being able to enter the high school. But on the other hand the number here decreases. But if it is in the interest of the child, it is understandable.” (Father of a child studying in school №4)*

*“Thirty two pupils are in the fourth grade from which nine are planning to enter the High School. But those nine pupils are really prominent ones, so they are children of teachers, or pastors, or they are going to continue studies abroad.” (Upper class teacher, school №6)*

In case of the gypsy school №7 it is hard to speak about indicators of the continuance of studies, because the majority of the pupils

<sup>24</sup> Beregszászi Magyar Gimnázium (BMG)

can hardly finish the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. In many cases the mere question of school attendance causes problems in this school. In addition social patterns of the Roma community, early family settling and child bearing makes finishing the primary school impossible.

## Conclusions

In this paper we tried to catch the moment of school choice and identify parental arguments for choosing one or another school. At the same time the educational supply provided by the institutes in the local education market also influence parental decisions.

Regarding the analysed interviews the language based decisions (the decision between Ukrainian and Hungarian-language schools) seems to be one of the most important considerations for minority existence, however other practical factors also influence school choice of Hungarian parents. Besides the medium of the schools, the ratio of Hungarian-speaking Roma children, the distance between children's home and the school, the quality of education, and family traditions seem to be determining factors.

**Table 6.**

*Competition of schools in some respect*

| Aspects of competition                  | Primary school №7 | Primary school №9 | Primary school №6 | Secondary school №10 | Secondary school №4 | Secondary school №3 | Hungarian High School |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Primary school interval                 | +                 | +                 | +                 | +                    | +                   | +                   | -                     |
| Matriculation                           | -                 | -                 | -                 | +                    | +                   | +                   | +                     |
| Continuance of studies, talent guidance | -                 | -                 | -                 | -                    | +                   | -                   | +                     |
| Village pupils                          | -                 | +                 | +                 | +                    | +                   | +                   | +                     |
| Roma pupils                             | +                 | +                 | +                 | -                    | (+)                 | -                   | -                     |

+ Competition exists

(+) Competition exists, however school doesn't take part deliberately

- Competition does not exist

Since almost half of the population of our research location in Beregszász belongs to the Hungarian minority, a fairly dense educa-

tional network is available in the Hungarian language. In Beregszász several secondary and primary schools appear already at the elementary level, so parents have real alternatives when it comes to choosing schools.

Real and comprehensive competition cannot be experienced between the schools. They are rivals only in some aspects. Enrolling children during the primary school interval is in the interest of all of the primary and secondary schools. In regards to the number of pupils some of the schools are forced to compete with school №7 for enrolling well-off Roma pupils. Due to its peripheral location school №3 has a strong aspiration for enrolling pupils from the neighbouring villages. Another kind of competition can be identified between school №4 and the Hungarian High School, because both of them are interested in talent guidance and are attracting talented pupils.

The issue of languages has a dominant presence in school choice in Beregszász. Due to the inadequate effectiveness of state language teaching in Hungarian schools all over Subcarpathia, and because of the obligatory school-leaving exam of the Ukrainian language and literature a tendency of choosing Ukrainian-language schools has increased among Hungarian parents with the aim of improving children's state language competences.

Our interviewees however revealed that this choice could have considerable consequences on the child's development. The majority of the people we asked had the opinion that while learning the state language is an aim of special importance and it faces obstacles in almost all of the Hungarian-language schools, nevertheless it is of vital importance that the appropriate solution for effective state-language teaching should be found within the Hungarian-language schools.

Education of Hungarian-speaking Roma children appeared as a key issue. There is a separate Hungarian-language school especially for Roma pupils, where the biggest problem is school attendance. During education in such schools teachers do not pay regard to Roma children's peculiar socialization patterns. In the school educational process gypsy culture appears neither in a symbolic way in forms of inscriptions, nor in the curricula or textbooks. Curriculum, textbooks used in their schools were made especially for the Ukrainian/ Subcarpathian Hungarian-language minority education.

Concerning the education of the Roma this is not the only difficulty. The other crucial problem is that these segregated schools are not able to fulfil the aim of educating the rapidly growing Roma population even at a lower level. At the same time among the Roma with a bit better material background the tendency of assimilating into the Hungarian ethnicity has appeared, which has a school choice aspect as well. Our data proved that the Hungarian community does not receive Roma overtures in a definitely positive way and consequently Hungarian children move away to a more Hungarian elite school, or even to Ukrainian-language schools.



# **External Voting Rights Diaspora Lobby**



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*Attila Varga*<sup>1</sup>

## **The Right to Vote of Romanian Citizens Living Abroad**

Romanian scientific literature uses the expression diaspora to describe citizens living abroad. This expression is simultaneously understood to mean the emigrants – those who have permanently settled down in another country; those who have kept or reacquired their Romanian citizenship and also those migrants who reside abroad temporarily for purposes of work, studies or for any other reason. Therefore, the emigrant and migrant element is mingled in the notion of the diaspora, while we talk about Romanian citizens in both cases, meaning that in terms of the exercise of the right to vote as a constitutional right, we cannot differentiate between the two categories.

Data relevant to the dimensions of the diaspora are more uncertain than the content of the notion itself since there are only estimations in this respect, which might mean millions more in the number of diaspora than it is in reality.

In the case of emigrants, their number is uncertain: if they emigrated before 1945, they presumably did not lose their Romanian citizenship and due to this fact their descendants are also Romanian citizens. If, however, they emigrated during the Communist regime either legally or illegally, then they definitely lost their citizenship, but were allowed to reacquire it after 1991 based on the new Citizenship Law through repatriation.

Consequently, Romanian emigrants as a community is not equivalent to the community of emigrants with Romanian citizenship living abroad, the latter is part of the former.

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As far as Romanian emigrants are concerned, their number is uncertain because a significant and non-negligible part of them resides in the given state on an irregular basis (e.g. with a legal employment permit) – although they are free to move in the Member States due to the accession to the EU. Therefore, we shall consider them “to be in hiding” with respect to the exercise of the right to vote or in relation to any registration of other nature.

Despite all this, Romanian political public opinion and legislation are both actively engaged in the debate on the right to vote of citizens living abroad, more accurately on the assurance of this right.

In Romania, the last EP elections took place in 2007, general parliamentary elections in 2008, and the presidential elections were held in 2009. We can examine the right to vote of citizens living abroad and the questions arising in terms of the exercise and practice of this right, based on the experience of these elections, primarily the latter two.

## **I. Constitutional and Legal Framework**

The right to vote of Romanian citizens living abroad is determined by three fundamental laws: the Constitution, the Electoral Law and the Citizenship Law.<sup>2</sup>

In Romania, following the political transition of 1989, a new Constitution was adopted in 1991, which was modified in 2003.

This modification affected the electoral system and the right to vote of citizens living abroad.

The most important relevant provision of the Constitution is the recognition of the right to vote (both active and passive) as a fundamental right. The constitution also guarantees the exercise of these rights as fundamental rights. The 2003 modification significantly eased the conditions for the exercise of the right to vote and extended it to dual citizens regardless of their permanent residence.

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<sup>2</sup> The present Romanian Constitution was adopted in 1991, and modified in 2003. The Electoral Law currently in force regulating general parliamentary elections is Law No. 2008/35. Citizenship is regulated under Law No. 1991/21, modified many times, the last time in 2007.

The recognition of the right to vote is of outstanding significance for Romanian citizens living abroad not only for political and democratic reasons or in relation to the framework of the rule of law, but also with respect to the assurance and exercise of fundamental, human rights. This is because Romania got over such a grave dictatorship, in which leaving the country was punished by deprivation of citizenship.

Under Article 5(2) of the Constitution it is declared that those, who became Romanian citizens by birth (in accordance with the principle of *ius sanguinis*) cannot be deprived of citizenship.

Article 36(1) of the fundamental law attaches the exercise of the right to vote to the passing of 18 years of age by the day of election. In the next subsection, the Constitution disqualifies those from voting who are “mentally deficient or alienated persons, laid under interdiction, as well as the persons disenfranchised by a final decision of the court”<sup>3</sup>.

Those who have Romanian citizenship and permanent residence shall be able to stand as candidates in the elections if they are not constitutionally barred from being members of a political party. Constitutional judges, ombudsmen, judges, prosecutors, active duty members of the armed forces and other public servants specified by law are affected by this constitutional restriction.

The age requirements for standing as a candidate are, under Article 37(2) of the Constitution: “up to or on the election day, at least twenty-three in order to be elected to the Chamber of Deputies or the bodies of local public administration, at least thirty-three in order to be elected to the Senate, and at least thirty-five in order to be elected to the office of President of Romania”.<sup>4</sup>

Comparing these provisions with the Citizenship Law, which does not prohibit dual or multiple citizenship, it can be determined that persons having dual or multiple citizenship are not excluded from the right to vote and only permanent Romanian residence is only a prerequisite to exercise the right to stand as candidate in the elections.

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<sup>3</sup> Constitution of Romania, Article 36 (2). [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?den=act2\\_2&par1=2#t2c2s0a36](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?den=act2_2&par1=2#t2c2s0a36)

<sup>4</sup> See *supra*.

The Romanian Constitution recognizes four types of elections with the direct participation of the citizens; these are:

**1) General parliamentary elections** – In this case dual citizens are also entitled to vote and also those Romanian citizens, who reside abroad either permanently or temporarily. Only those have the right to stand as candidates who are Romanian citizens or dual citizens but have a permanent Romanian residence.

**2) Presidential elections** – The right to vote is governed in accordance with the rules of general parliamentary elections above; however, the presidential candidate must be a person who is a Romanian citizen and has a permanent Romanian residence.

**3) Local government elections** – Relevant EU norms are in effect, EU citizens living in the territory of the country may vote or stand as candidates in the given regional-administrative unit, where they live.

**4) EP elections** – In accordance with EU rules.<sup>5</sup>

The parliamentary electoral system currently in effect is regulated by the Electoral Law that entered into force in 2008. It is a cornerstone of this piece of legislation that the former proportional party-list electoral system was replaced with an electoral system of one round based solely on single-member constituencies, but it still can be said to be proportional. This in effect has formally created the parliamentary representation of Romanian citizens living abroad.

This representation is to be considered formal due to the following facts: Previously the Romanian citizens living abroad could only vote for a national party-list and under the new electoral system they can vote for individual candidates, who – however – are also party candidates. On the other hand, their representation is restricted to 4 MPs and 2 senators.

In the above-mentioned new electoral system the parliamentary representation of Romanian citizens living abroad is realized by establishing a 43<sup>rd</sup> district besides the 42 Romanian election districts, this 43<sup>rd</sup> effectively included the entire electorate beyond Romanian.

The 42 election districts encompass the existing counties and individual (single-member) constituencies which were created in

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<sup>5</sup> Regulated by Articles 36-38, 62, and 81 of the Constitution.

different numbers (depending on the size and population of the county) in these. In order to demonstrate the discrepancies, I would like to mention that while in Brasov, which counts as a big county, there are 8 seats for representatives and 4 for senators to be obtained, in the smaller county of Satu Mare, there are 5 seats for representatives and 2 for senators to be obtained.

Based on this pattern, in the 43<sup>rd</sup> election district there are 4 single member constituencies for representatives and 2 for senators.<sup>6</sup>

**The territory of constituencies for the election of representatives:**

- 1. European district** – consisting of EU Member States;
- 2. Asian district** – consisting of non-EU states and the territory of Asia;
- 3. American district** – consisting of North and South-America as well as Australia and New Zealand;
- 4. African district** – consisting of the Arab states of the Middle East, Israel and African states;

**The first and second districts form one of the two districts of senators, whereas the third and the fourth form the other one.**

According to official estimates, in 2008 1.3-1.5 million Romanians resided abroad legally, most of them in EU Member States. If we add to this the number those residing abroad unofficially and not entirely legally, this figure might increase by a million, thus reaching even 2.5 million.

In spite of this, more than 72,000 voters cast their votes on the 2007 EP elections, 24,000 on the 2008 general elections, and almost 150,000 on the 2009 presidential elections. Despite the significant discrepancies, voter participation is rather low in comparison to the number of those residing abroad.

The reasons behind this have been assessed by those concerned as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> The structure of the Romanian Parliament is bicameral, it comprises a House of Representatives and a Senate. For further details on the topic: Varga Attila, Veress Emőd,; *Román alkotmányjog – egyetemi jegyzet* (Romanian Constitutional Law – Course Material for University Students), Status Kiadó, Miercurea Ciuc, 2007

**a) Political apathy** exacerbated by the lack of information and disinterest in Romanian political life. This is essentially the prolongation of domestic voter behavior abroad.

**b) Costs**, given that the voting booths and wards are situated in the establishments of the consulate or the embassy; often several hundred kilometers away from where the voters live.

**c) Possibility to vote** upon the certification of their permanent residence, or if not, of the fact that those intending to vote are entered on the Romanian electoral roll which would require them to travel home to vote, but they will not do so for this purpose.<sup>7</sup>

All this signifies that while authorities cannot do anything about turning away from politics, the administrative barriers can be surmounted by adequate regulations and measures, moreover, communication and information exchange can also be significantly improved.

## II. Experiences of the parliamentary and the presidential elections

Before going into detail on the concrete experiences, it should be pointed out that debate relevant to the right to vote of Romanian citizens living abroad livened before but primarily after the elections. This might result in the modification of the Electoral Law on the occasion of the 2012 upcoming elections.

It can be concluded generally that there are several pros and cons in terms of arguments for the right to vote of citizens living abroad. Among **the pros** we could mention the following:

**a) The constitutional institution of citizenship** presupposes – based on its content – the exercise of the full scope of related rights and the legal capacity of citizens to exercise of these rights in accordance with their status as citizens. Obviously, it follows from the foregoing that this includes the constitutional right to vote.

**b) Equality** as a principle of the regulation of citizenship, under which no distinction shall be made between Romanian citizens based

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<sup>7</sup> Reprezentarea diasporei si votul românilor din străinătate. Fundația Soros România. (The representation of the diaspora and the vote of Romanians living abroad. Romanian Soros Foundation.), Bucharest, 2009, p. 6-7



on residence, particularly if it comes to the exercise of a fundamental political right.

**c) Involvement in the political life** is made possible through the free exercise of this above-mentioned right.

**d) Maintaining ties with the motherland** is made possible through the free exercise of this above-mentioned right.

Among **the cons** we could mention the following:

**a) The gradually diminishing relationship** of Romanian citizens living abroad with the Romanian state leads to a diminished awareness of Romanian reality.

**b) Impossibility of the election campaign** due to great geographic distances within an election district and to other logistical obstacles which result in reducing the election campaign in reality.

**c) Candidates are offered by those in the motherland** which makes it questionable but also uncertain whether those living beyond the borders feel that they will represent them and their interests.

**d) The consequences of the political decisions** are not borne by those living abroad.

In the following, let us review a few problems of a technical nature in relation to elections.

Law No. 2008/35 on the election of the Parliament prescribed that an **electoral roll (register)** shall be established containing the Romanian citizens past their 18<sup>th</sup> year of age who are eligible to vote, including those who have their permanent or temporary residence abroad.

Based on the above, the local governments will prepare and update their own electoral rolls. **Electoral rolls (registers)** can be of two kinds: (i) a permanent electoral roll; (ii) a supplementary electoral roll – for those who cast their votes on election day in a voting ward or booth not corresponding to their residence.

Registration of Romanian citizens living abroad on the electoral rolls shall take place based on the data of the Passport Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The regularly recurring problem with the permanent electoral roll is that the mayors are in charge of the updating. This task is not easy. There is a lot of imprecision either due to the fact that the address has changed but the old address is still registered, or due to

the fact that those registered have deceased in the meantime, but they are still included in the register.

Technically, although citizens living abroad should be included in the permanent electoral roll, they are also included in a supplementary electoral roll that is compiled at the diplomatic outposts in the course of the election, based on their appearance at the election.

**Candidates** are offered by the parties, albeit the electoral system is based on single-member constituencies. Candidates are not bound by law to have a permanent residence in the constituency where they stand as candidates. Even though it does not pose a serious problem in the country, the issue arises abroad in a different context, due to the fact that if the candidates themselves are not Romanian citizens living abroad it is more difficult for them to address voters living abroad.

The **campaign** is significantly hard or impossible partially due to the above but also due to several other objective factors. It is sufficient to refer here to the great geographical distances within the districts. Besides these, candidates can often rely only on their own personal means and their knowledge of their situation.

On the other hand, neither an eventually good campaign nor the most votes cast for a given candidate guarantees their receiving of a mandate in the end. Pursuant to the electoral system such a redistribution (compensation) mechanism was created, which might change the results achieved in the elections. This phenomenon was christened by Romanian experts as the Kötő paradox.<sup>8</sup> In the fourth Middle-Eastern and African constituency within the 43<sup>rd</sup> foreign election district the candidate of the currently governing Democratic Party was the Ambassador of Romania to Israel, who had a good knowledge of the area where he could expect the most votes. Eventually, he obtained the majority of the votes among all the candidates, approximately 1,200. However, in the course of redistribution, he ended up losing the mandate to another candidate, who obtained a mere 34 votes and became the MP for the constituency this way. This person was the candidate of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, József Kötő.

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<sup>8</sup> The expression was first used by political scientist Cristian Pîrvulescu, in an interview given to a national newspaper: *Inteviu cu Cristian Pîrvulescu, Adevărul* <http://www.adevarul.ro/articole-cristian-pirvulescu-deputatul-koto-nu-a-castigat-cu-voturile-din-diaspora.html>

The experts explained – correctly – that Kötő did not get the mandate with 34 votes, but all the votes cast for the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania. The total of these votes received in the country and in the 43<sup>rd</sup> district shall be added to that, that were “attributed to his account” in redistributing (compensating) the votes. This, as I have mentioned already, is one of the fundamental and general weaknesses of the whole electoral system, but it increases the importance of the votes cast in case of citizens living abroad, and diminishes the stake of participation in the elections since the question as to which candidate will eventually obtain a mandate will be decided by an *a priori* unpredictable mathematical equation. This might lead to significant frustration among voters but also in the elected representatives.

On the one hand, it can be determined that the law provides for the right to vote of Romanian citizens living abroad, but its exercise is significantly difficult. On the other hand, there is a reserved foreign election district with 4 constituencies for the election of representatives and 2 for the election of senators, but this does not mean and does not automatically result in the *de facto* parliamentary representation of Romanian citizens living abroad.

The **venue of voting** is also in question, since it is only possible to cast votes in the establishments of the diplomatic outposts, at the embassies and at the consulates, which are in many cases several hundred kilometers away from the residence of the voters. This can be considered an obstacle that restrains the exercise of voting.

On the occasion of the 2008 and 2009 elections about 221 election wards operated and were at the disposal of voters, a number, which is severely limiting.

In terms of **the method of voting**, at present, it is only possible to cast votes in person and only at designated areas. However, the possibility arose that postal voting be allowed. This proposal has more opponents than proponents, at the moment.

Lastly, allow me to mention the **election results** registered in the foreign election district.<sup>9</sup>

In the 2008 general election the number of votes validly cast for candidates to the House of Representatives was 23,560; this assured

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<sup>9</sup> Data can be found on the website of the Permanent Electoral Authority: <http://www.roaep.ro>

the 4 mandates (seats), while the number of the votes validly cast for the senatorial candidates of the Senate was 23,461, which qualified for 2 mandates (seats). If we consider that 1.5 million Romanian citizens lived abroad, based on the more modest estimation, this translates into an exceptionally low level of participation.

The 2009 presidential election was decided in the second round in favor of the incumbent president in office with a minimal difference and determined by the votes cast abroad. Based on the records of the Central Election Office 10,620,116 votes were cast in the second round, (signifying a 58.02 per cent participation), of which 10,481,568 votes (98.69 per cent) were validly cast, and an additional 138,476 (1.3 per cent) invalidly cast.

Traian Băsescu obtained 5,275,808 votes of those validly cast – 50.33 per cent of the votes –, while his opponent the Social-Democrat Mircea Geana obtained 5,205,760 votes, making up 49.33 per cent of the votes cast. The difference was 70,048 votes.

The number of the votes cast for the presidential candidates in the foreign election district was: 147,754, of this 146,876 were validly, 863 invalidly cast. Traian Băsescu (incumbent candidate supported by the governing party) received 115,831 votes, Mircea Geana (PSD) 31,045 votes, with a difference of 84,786 votes.

This election result (also signifying low participation), indicates that the votes cast abroad decided the election of the president. This result increases the value of the right to vote of citizens living abroad, while it might also raise concerns for some on the home front.

### **III. Plans and proposals in terms of the modification of the Electoral Law**

Currently, preparations are in progress for the modification of the Electoral Law in the Romanian Parliament. There are debates on principles, professional and political discussions on how to conduct the 2012 general elections, what to preserve and what to reinforce, and what to change in the electoral system.

Starting with the experience of the previous 2008 elections, the criticism of the current compensation mechanism and of the clearly single-member constituency system becomes more and more

pronounced. The necessity to introduce a mixed system appears among the recommendations. This, obviously, even if only indirectly, affects the right to vote of Romanian citizens living abroad.

On the other hand, the idea rendering postal voting possible for Romanian citizens living abroad affects this subject much more directly.<sup>10</sup>

This is a recommendation of the currently governing party, but is opposed by everyone else since it lacks logistical conditions and concerns are raised due to possible abuse and the increased risk of election fraud.

Although there is a significantly serious dislike and objection to postal voting based on the above reasons, it is noteworthy to reflect on its advantages and disadvantages even outside the context of the current Romanian situation.

According to the recognized experts of the issue the reduction of election costs can be enumerated among the advantages. Furthermore, the voter is not obliged to show up at an election ward and travel several hundred kilometers on occasion, and the participation rates might also increase as a result.

It can be considered a disadvantage that a competent and suitable bureaucracy (personnel, logistics and financial resources) is necessary for this “correspondence”, the possibility of election fraud increases, the secrecy of voting might be violated, the election procedure is non-transparent, voters do not have equal access to the campaign and the voters casting their votes this way become insulated from the electoral process.<sup>11</sup>

All of these might create distrust in the voter who votes either by postal voting or traditionally, in person.

Postal voting requires the construction of a specific procedural system extending to the identification of the citizens eligible to vote, the delivery of materials necessary for voting, their adequate manage-

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<sup>10</sup> For more on this topic: Toma Burean, Carmen Greab și Iulia Georgescu: Implementarea unor metode de vot, alternative în România, între necesitate, utilitate și fezabilitate (Application of alternative voting methods in Romania – between necessity, usefulness and feasibility), in *Reprezentarea diasporei și votul românilor din străinătate*, Fundația Soros România, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, Dennis F. „Electoral Simultaneity: Expressing Equal Respect”, *Journal of Social Issues*, 2008 vol. 64. Nr. 3, pp. 487-501.

ment, the conduct of voting, the return of the enveloped votes to the home-country, and control and tally of the result.

Every phase of this procedure is suitable for creating distrust among political rivals and to cast the shadow of the suspicion of an eventual election fraud in the whole process.

Other alternative methods of voting such as e-voting, preliminary or proxy voting did not even come up in the debates.

Other parts of the electoral system might be affected by the changes, primarily in respect of constructing such a redistribution (compensation) system that is more equitable and predictable than the current one, and the reduction of the number of seats in the parliament is also among the plans. All of these somehow touch upon the right to vote of Romanian citizens living abroad and the parliamentary representation. However, the real problem is how to create the conditions for the exercise of this right, which is essentially honest and insured against abuse.

Nonetheless, we cannot but mention that there is a recurring ulterior motive. It is a question whether domestic politics wishes to honestly include in the election process a layer of voters who do not live in the country. Their number is uncertain and their registration is lacking and they could be objects for political manipulation. The current Minister of Foreign Affairs, former Ambassador to Paris at the time of the 2009 elections said publicly at one of the national caucuses of the governing party that they should accept the possibility of postal voting and he (!) will ensure an additional one million votes for the party. It is not an accident, thus, that every political party tends to object even to the mentioning of the introduction of this facilitated voting method mentioned above.

However, it is hard to predict at this moment what modifications will be adopted in the electoral system by the Romanian parliament.

The right to vote of Romanian citizens living abroad shall remain, since it is a constitutional right and fundamental value. The question only remains: to what extent will the legislator - and later on the government through different administrative measures - help to dissolve the obstacles that stand in the way to the exercise this right.

*Translated by Márton Sulyok*

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*Eszter Herner-Kovács*

## **Challenging the Conventional Wisdom on Ethnic Lobby Success in the United States: the Case of HHRF**

Ethnic interests influencing U.S. foreign policy making has been a debated issue by American political scientists for a long time, especially since the end of the Cold War. There have been many papers, articles, studies and books published on the significance of ethnic lobbies in the United States. Scholars are divided on the question whether the involvement of ethnic groups' interest in foreign policy shaping is beneficial for the U.S. or whether ethnic lobbies represent a real threat to American interest (if 'American interest' can be interpreted without the involvement of ethnic groups living in the U.S., at all).

The aim of this paper<sup>1</sup> is to examine and interpret the scientific discourse on ethnic influence on American foreign policy with the help of a case study that may contradict the theoretical definitions of ethnic lobby success: the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation's greatest lobby success in 1987, when this American-based Hungarian lobby organization contributed to the suspension of Romania's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status, building their strategy entirely on Romania's human rights violations and Ceausescu's maltreatment of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. I analyze the case study with the methodology drawn up by the best-known ethnic lobby literature, and my hypothesis is that the existing literature does not explain exhaustively the success of the HHRF in 1987.

The first part of the paper presents the general American political discourse on ethnic interest groups' influence on American foreign policy, as well as the logic of lobbying in the United States. The second

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the abbreviated version of the author's thesis submitted to PPKE BTK English Studies in 2013.

section is dedicated to the case study on the HHRF. I would like to mention here Mr László Hámos, founder and president of the HHRF, to whom I am very grateful for all his help. I am especially grateful for the numerous HHRF documents he made available to me and the interview he gave me via Skype. Throughout the paper, when talking about ethnic (or the diaspora) lobby in the States, I use it in the sense of Yossi Shain's definition<sup>2</sup>: "people with common ethnic-national-religious origin who reside outside a claimed or an independent home territory. They regard themselves and/or are regarded by others as members or potential members of their country of origin".<sup>3</sup>

### **Theoretical frames of reference of ethnic lobbies in the United States; Theoretical debate on the evaluation of ethnic lobby influence**

The influential power of ethnic lobbies on United States foreign policy has been a debated issue among political scientists, especially since the end of the Cold War. Although the political activism of ethnic (or diaspora) groups in the U.S. has a rather long history, the debate on whether their influence is beneficial or harmful in American politics has come to the forefront of political and scientific discourse only after 1990. While the international atmosphere and the balance of power during the Cold War defined very strictly the foreign policy agenda of the United States, the collapse of communism brought a totally new age of international politics, in which the U.S. found itself without a coherent and unambiguous foreign policy strategy. This abrupt political vacuum and the lack of a constant threat (communism) made political scientists reconsider American interest as well as American "obligations" on the international level. The debate shed light on the

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<sup>2</sup> Shain, Y., 1999. *Marketing the American creed abroad: diasporas in the U.S. and their homelands*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p.8

<sup>3</sup> Since the HHRF is an organization working for the rights of Hungarian minorities living outside Hungary, the HHRF cannot be regarded as a classical ethnic lobby organization in the sense Shain defines this category. However, since the members of HHRF consider themselves as part of the Hungarian diaspora in the US, and maintain relationships with every Hungarian government since 1989, the HHRF can be listed among ethnic lobby organizations.



issue of ethnic interest groups' influence on American policy making; although the phenomenon had already existed since the founding of the United States, it received relatively little attention until the 1990s, even if some papers were published on the topic in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

Although the worries expressed because of the growing influence of ethnic lobby groups in the States has its roots in the experience of the changing international environment after 1990, the fear of "divided loyalties" is old. As Ambrosio puts it, since the U.S. was founded and populated by immigrants, there were always groups that had "significant affective and political ties to their homelands", which might result in divided or conflicted loyalties. "Hyphenated Americans"<sup>5</sup>, thus, have been representing the challenge of standing for the interest of the former homeland at the expense of U.S. national interests.<sup>6</sup> Best-known experts on ethnic lobbies – Yossi Shain, Thomas Ambrosio, Tony Smith – all regard the rise of multiculturalism (1970s and 1980s) as the turning point in the evaluation of multiple identities in American society. Ambrosio claims that multiculturalism has brought "greater acceptance of multiple identities (...) without calling into question the loyalty of those holding multiple identities" within the American society.<sup>7</sup> Next to multiculturalism, the success of the human rights movement in the U.S. has also greatly contributed to the growing tolerance of ethnicity, just like the revised Immigration Act of 1965, which resulted in the growing number of foreign-born Americans who were ready to seek influence on American foreign policy in order to help their ancestral homelands.<sup>8</sup>

However, this growing acceptance of ethnic identity in the American society did not bring along a consensus on the evaluation of

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<sup>4</sup> Ambrosio, T., 2002. *Ethnic identity groups and U.S. foreign policy*. Westport, Conn. p.4, Shain, 1999, p.1 and Shain, Y., 1994. Ethnic Diasporas and U.S. Foreign Policy. *Political Science Quarterly* 1994 Vol. 109 No. 5. p.812

<sup>5</sup> Hyphenated Americans is the common term which refers to immigrants in the United States who have – more or less – kept their original national identity even after settling down in the New World, eg. Irish-Americans, Italian-Americans, Hungarian-Americans etc.

<sup>6</sup> Ambrosio, 2002, p.4-5

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Shain 1999, p.22

ethnic lobby influence on American foreign policy in academic and professional circles. Whether the ethnic lobby is a positive or negative phenomenon in American policy making has remained and still is a debated issue among experts. The two main conflicting approaches can be shortly summarized as follows:

1. *Ethnic lobbies are highly influential on U.S. foreign policy and represent a real threat to the American national interest.*

2. *The significance of ethnic influence on U.S. foreign policy is exaggerated, and, even if they are influential, they serve a good purpose, i.e. the promotion of American values in the World.*<sup>9</sup>

Among the representatives of the first approach are both left-wing and right-wing American political scientists, like Bruce Robbins, Samuel P. Huntington, Tony Smith and Arthur M. Schlesinger.<sup>10</sup> **Bruce Robbins**, a leftist thinker claims that ethnic involvement in U.S. foreign policy is “suspicious”, and considers ethnic diaspora members discredited. As Shain formulates Robbins’ arguments, “diasporic information or opinions on homeland affairs are to be seen as being less reliable because these individuals have split their lives between two countries”, and, “by the time ethnic voices are heard, they are almost by definition no longer authentically ethnic, so their value has been lost”.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, **S. P. Huntington** and other rightist scholars – like A. M. Schlesinger – argue that it leads to incoherence if the ethnic voice is reflected in foreign policy.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, since U.S. foreign policy is in a state of confusion after the Cold War, Huntington goes so far as advising a policy that limits the “diversion of American resources to the service of particularistic subnational, transnational, and non-national interests”.<sup>13</sup> In Huntington’s view, American foreign policy should be based upon, just as in the era of the Cold War, the “Anglo-American establishment”<sup>14</sup>,

<sup>9</sup> Gregg, H. S., 2002. Divided They Conquer: The Success of Armenian Ethnic Lobbies in the US. *Working paper, MIT*, [online] Available at <[http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/migration/pubs/rrwp/13\\_divided.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/migration/pubs/rrwp/13_divided.pdf)> [Accessed 5 February 2013] pp.2-5

<sup>10</sup> Shain, 1999, p.203, and Gregg, 2002, pp2-5.

<sup>11</sup> Shain, 1999, p.204

<sup>12</sup> Shain, 1999, p.205

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Shain, 1999, p.206

and any other influences should be disregarded when formulating foreign policy.<sup>15</sup>

Let me mention a third representative who does not favor the activity of ethnic lobby groups. In the introduction of his book *“Foreign Attachments. The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy”*, **Tony Smith** argues that the issue of ethnic lobby influence on foreign policy illuminates the contradictions of pluralist democracy, and raises the question “how to balance the rights and interests of the organized few against the rights and interests of the often inattentive many”. Therefore Tony Smith claims that “... the negative consequences of ethnic involvement may well outweigh the undoubted benefits this activism at times confers on America in world affairs”.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, Smith shares the view of Huntington concerning the erosion of the national interest with the involvement of ethnic interests<sup>17</sup>. However, Smith’s explanation for the negative consequences of ethnic influence is based not exclusively on the multiculturalism of the American society, but also on the nature of foreign policy making in the United States.<sup>18</sup> Among the opponents of ethnic influence on American foreign policy, Tony Smith is the least radical one, suggesting that a rational debate should be opened on the framework of ethnic influence on American foreign policy in order to reach a coherent and consistent foreign policy strategy.<sup>19</sup>

Let us now turn our attention to the other side, led by **Yossi Shain** and **Thomas Ambrosio**, who do not consider ethnic lobbies as a negative feature of American foreign policy. On the contrary, they claim that ethnic involvement in policy making can be rather beneficial for the United States. Shain asserts that “the negative impact of ethnic involvement in U.S. foreign affairs has been exaggerated and even falsified”, moreover, “[i]nvolvement in U.S. foreign policy is in fact often one of the clearest indications that an ethnic community

<sup>15</sup> Huntington, S. P., 1997. The Erosion of the National Interest. *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 1997, 28-49, Shain, 1999, p.206 and Gregg, 2002, p.3

<sup>16</sup> Smith, T., 2000. *Foreign attachments : the power of ethnic groups in the making of American foreign policy*. Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Harvard University Press p.2

<sup>17</sup> Smith, 2000, p.13

<sup>18</sup> Smith, 2000, pp.85-94 and Gregg, 2002, p.3

<sup>19</sup> Smith, 2000, p.17

has 'arrived' in American society, and that it has demonstrated its willingness not only to reinforce and uphold American values such as democracy and pluralism inside America, but to promote these values abroad".<sup>20</sup> (Hence the title of Shain's book: *Marketing the American Creed Abroad*.) Furthermore, Shain adds that diasporas "are more likely to support existing regimes whose policies coincide with American liberalism and/or U.S. foreign objectives and actively oppose those which do not".<sup>21</sup>

Thomas Ambrosio considers that "the rise of identity politics in U.S. foreign policy is a natural outcome of the changes in the American polity that have opened the policy process to greater influence by societal interest groups", be it ethnic, racial or religious.<sup>22</sup> After summarizing the most common arguments in favor of (multicultural foreign policy reflects the American liberal democratic ethos; respects diversity; can correct former "white" foreign policies; helps resist isolationism; spreads democratic principles throughout the world; reinforces U.S. interests) and against (ethnic interest groups put their interests ahead of American national interests; undercut democratic principles; may be agents of foreign governments; promote incoherent foreign policy; might prevent necessary changes in U.S. foreign policy; may become simply too powerful; can involve the U.S. in conflicts where no American interest is threatened) the ethnic involvement in American foreign policy, Ambrosio concludes that "[a]lthough in some cases ethnic identity groups may have a disproportionate level of influence over specific policies, it is important not to exaggerate their power. Only in very rare circumstances is the influence of a particular ethnic lobby the sole factor in determining policy. Instead, ethnic identity groups merely play an important, and indeed legitimate, role in the overall foreign policy process. (...) [T]he diversity that enriches our domestic life may, under certain circumstances, likewise enrich our foreign relations."<sup>23</sup>

Having seen the most important points of the debate among American political scientists on the influence of ethnic groups on

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<sup>20</sup> Shain, 1999, p.8

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ambrosio, 2002, p.4

<sup>23</sup> Ambrosio, 2002, pp.200-212

American foreign policy, in the next part we will pay attention to the nature of ethnic lobbying in the U.S.

### **Ethnic lobbying in the American political system**

What enables ethnic interest groups to influence the American decision making process? According to Tony Smith, besides the social character of the United States (i.e. nation of immigrants) it is “the structure of American democracy that allows ethnic communities, and a much wider range of civic interest groups in general, access to policymaking”.<sup>24</sup> The system of “checks and balances” prevents the monopolization of power, which results in a more democratic (or, rather, decentralized) policy making process. The fact that the American political system is decentralized and pluralist makes it easier for interest groups to access political actors. Shain stresses the power of individual members of Congress, which facilitates interest groups to easily exercise influence on important decision makers, as well as their accessibility to the media.<sup>25</sup> Smith identifies three ways for interest groups to exercise influence on American political actors: through vote; campaign financing; and by an organizational body articulating clear demands, mobilizing their constituents and building alliances with other groups.<sup>26</sup>

In the case of voting, it is important to bear in mind that it is not the national (presidential) level of elections that depends the most on ethnic identity groups, but rather it is the congressional elections. “Because of the role of primaries<sup>27</sup> in congressional elections, the decentralized character of the Congress itself, and the absence of strong mechanisms of national party discipline, voting pressure on Congress (especially on the House of Representatives) is a more likely source of access to decisionmaking for ethnic lobbies”, Smith

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<sup>24</sup> Smith, 2000, p.86-89

<sup>25</sup> Shain, 1994, p.830

<sup>26</sup> Smith, 2000.

<sup>27</sup> Primaries are ‘pre-elections’ in the United States; in the context of the primaries, the candidates of a political party for the elections are nominated directly by the people.

claims.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, if an ethnic group represents a large proportion of the population in a congressional district, no matter how small that community otherwise is, their vote will be important for the Congressman. In the case of campaign financing, the crucial factor is that “individuals from outside the congressional district may make contributions for races in which they are not themselves eligible to vote.”<sup>29</sup> With their contributions, interest groups are able to find politicians who will stand for their interests. However, votes and money are insufficient for gaining real influence; an organized body is needed which ensures the unity of the ethnic community, forms alliances with other societal groups, and monitors policy making and implementation.

By organizational unity Smith means first the capacity to create cohesion, tackle rival conceptions or personal rivalries, and ensure ideological consensus within the organization. Second, a “political agenda must be established, allies sought, and actual political pressure brought to bear”.<sup>30</sup> The political agenda defined by the ethnic group can vary from human rights and democratic government abroad (typical of African, Irish, Cuban, Armenian and East European diasporas), economic development and foreign aid (typical of virtually all ethnic groups), and security issues such as NATO enlargement or the balance of power of a region. If an ethnic group works together with other interest groups (ethnic groups, churches, or business organizations) that have similar profile and goals, obviously it will be much easier to gain influence on American legislation. Smith suggests that it is crucial to reach the American public opinion, so having good ties with the media is an essential condition for successful lobbying. Finally, closely monitoring and/or defining policymaking processes is a crucial element of a successful lobby organization, which implies that lobby groups have to establish close contacts with decisionmakers. Although the President is the most powerful actor in American decisionmaking, one has to bear in mind that the possibilities of directly influencing the President are quite limited. Therefore, and for the already mentioned democratic nature

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<sup>28</sup> Smith, 2000, p.99

<sup>29</sup> Smith, 2000, p.101

<sup>30</sup> Smith, 2000, p.116

of the American political party and election system, it is more beneficial to concentrate one's efforts on the Congress.<sup>31</sup>

Another approach to the possible success of ethnic groups was elaborated by Patrick J. Haney and Walt Vanderbush<sup>32</sup> based on a synthesis of the literature on ethnic lobbies. Haney and Vanderbush mention **organizational strength** in the first place on the list of the characteristics of powerful ethnic groups. Organizational strength includes "organizational unity, a professional lobbying apparatus that provides useful information, and financial resources". **Membership unity, placement, and voter participation** are important, based on the group's electoral capacities; if an ethnic group disposes a large, like-minded, politically active membership who are ready to vote in a bloc, they are more likely to convince the American decisionmaker to favor their goals. Haney and Vanderbush add that the members of the ethnic group need to be assimilated into the American society while at the same time they have to have intensive ties to their homeland. Moreover, "the **salience and resonance of the message** a group promotes is important", which means targeting to win the sympathy of the greater public. To convince the public of their efforts is easier and more probable if the ethnic group promotes "oppositionless issues", that is, "issues around which there is little disagreement about the policy goals but significant disagreement about the choice of means to the goal"<sup>33</sup>. **Pushing on an open door** is another important, yet probably obvious condition of effective lobbying, which means promoting goals that are already on the government's political agenda. In my opinion, this idea can be linked to what Haney and Vanderbush refer to as the salience and resonance of the message; if an interest group aims to achieve goals which coincide with American values and are supported by public opinion, it can be interpreted as pushing on an open door as well. Another essential element listed by the two authors is the **permeability of and access to the government**. Here, the role of Congress is stressed once again, because it is "more porous than the executive". Last but not least, the

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<sup>31</sup> Smith, 2000, p.109-129

<sup>32</sup> Haney, P. J. and Vanderbrush, W., 1999. The Role of Ethnic Interest Groups in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Case of the Cuban American National Foundation. *International Studies Quarterly*, (1999) 43, 341-361. pp.344-345

<sup>33</sup> Watanabe, 1984, cited by Haney and Vanderbush, 1999, p.345

argument of a *mutually* supportive relationship is listed by Haney and Vanderbush. They refer to Watanabe, who claims that not only interest groups need policymakers, but policymakers need interest groups as well. Since interest groups provide information, votes and campaign contributions<sup>34</sup> in return for the politician's efforts, the two parties can establish a "symbiotic relationship"<sup>35</sup>. Watanabe goes so far as to say that in particular cases, a politician may even aggressively "encourage ethnic groups' activism in order to receive valuable support and resources".

In the next section we will challenge these criteria with the help of a case study on the HHRF's lobbying success.

### HHRF

The Committee for Human Rights in Rumania was founded (CHRR, later their activities were expanded to all Hungarian communities in the Carpathian Basin, hence the new name Hungarian Human Rights Foundation) in 1976 by some enthusiastic, young Hungarians in the United States; some of them were refugees from Transylvania, some were raised in the States, some were recent emigrants from Hungary, and only two of them were already involved in the business of organizing the Hungarian-American community.<sup>36</sup> The HHRF has been working as a private, independent and non-profit organization ever since its foundation. As László Hámos, founder and president of the HHRF claimed in one of his speeches, the goal of the HHRF was (and still is) to ensure a "human, free, and democratic life for the Hungarian minorities, the right to use their mother tongue and to maintain and improve their cultural, religious, educational, informational organizations".<sup>37</sup> Hámos defined the notion of human rights as

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<sup>34</sup> Watanabe's argument coincides mostly with Smith's.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Hámos, L., 1995. *Hungarian-Americans and Hungary: Current Perspectives*. Lecture at Columbia University, University Seminar on Post-Communist States, Societies and Economies October 27 1995. [transcript of the lecture]

<sup>37</sup> Hámos, L., 1989. *A nyugati magyarság felelőssége: Eredmények és feladatok*. [online], [Transcript, Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem Akadémiai Napok] Available at: <http://www.itt-ott.org/archives/10/6618/document.pdf> [Accessed: 24 March 2013]



one of the most important tools to achieve their goals, mostly because human rights “fit well” into American political culture.<sup>38</sup> In the Cold War era, the main tools used by the HHRF to call the attention of the American public to the oppression and persecution of Hungarian communities were demonstrations; newspaper advertisements; backing domestic protest movements (in Romania); lobbying for the suspension of Romania’s MFN status; and taking part in CSCE<sup>39</sup> meetings.

After 1989, new opportunities emerged to strengthen or expand their lobbying tools, and therefore the activities of HHRF changed in many respects. HHRF’s current activities are mostly dependent on the actual hot issues of Hungarian communities that are linked to human rights. Just like before 1989, HHRF still regularly attends domestic and international human rights conferences and meetings. Occasionally, HHRF conducts fundraising efforts to assist cultural and educational institutions to serve their aim of identity preservation and cultivation. Moreover, they launched a Visitor’s Program, in the frame of which prominent minority leaders or spokesmen could address American decisionmakers (even the President) with the concerns and needs of their communities. Also, HHRF regularly collects, translates, analyzes and disseminates reliable studies and reports on the human rights conditions of minority communities abroad, and besides, the HHRF website hosts the homepages of ethnic Hungarian organizations and newspapers.<sup>40</sup>

### **Case study: The role of the HHRF’s in the suspension of Romania’s MFN status**

This section examines the case study of the lobbying efforts of HHRF for the human rights of the Hungarian minority in Romania, which finally culminated in the suspension of Romania’s Most Favored Nation trading status in 1987. Ceausescu’s Romania was one of the favored states in the Eastern European communist bloc by the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

<sup>40</sup> HHRF website

United States, since Ceausescu represented a maverick communist leadership and gained a certain level of independence from the Soviet Union. Romania did not participate in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, nor did it break off its relations with Israel in 1967 when other communist countries did, and finally, Romania permitted liberal emigration quotas for Jews.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, America rewarded the country with special attention and trade agreements, among which the Most Favored Nation status was the most generous one. Most Favored Nation status was accorded to Romania in 1975, which allowed the country to pay the lowest duty charged for products, that is, low tariffs and high import quotas.

However, the MFN status was linked to the human rights policies of the recipient country with the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which “affect[ed] U.S. trade relations with communist or former communist countries that restrict freedom of emigration and other human rights. It was a response to the Soviet Union’s “diploma taxes” levied on Jews attempting to emigrate. However, the President was given the authority to grant a yearly waiver to the provisions of Jackson-Vanik if he determines that maintaining the waiver (that is, the MFN status) would contribute to the accomplishment of the goal of the restriction”.<sup>42</sup> According to Ludanyi, the Hungarian-American human rights activists, who were becoming involved in the 1970’s-1980’s, they “utilized [the president’s] annual review as the means to focus attention on Rumanian human rights violations”.<sup>43</sup> László Hámos made it clear in his interview that it was Bulcsú Veress, one of the core founding members of HHRF, who realized this opportunity hidden in the 1974 Trade Act.<sup>44</sup> The first time the HHRF (at that time CHRR) tried to challenge the renewal of Romania’s MFN status was 1976; although the HHRF convinced 78 Congressmen not to support the extension of Romania’s MFN status

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<sup>41</sup> Moffett, G. D., 1987. Measure in Congress would pressure Romania on human rights. Critics of Bucharest want to suspend its preferred trading status. *The Christian Science Monitor* [online] 20 May 1987 Available at: <<http://www.csmonitor.com/1987/0520/arom.html>> [Accessed: 15 May 2013]

<sup>42</sup> Jackson-Vanik Amendment, 1974

<sup>43</sup> Ludanyi, A. 1990. Hungarian Lobbying Efforts for the Human Rights of Minorities in Rumania: The CHRR/HHRF as a Case Study. *Hungarian Studies* 6/1 (1990).

<sup>44</sup> Hámos, L., 2013. *Discussion on HHRF’s lobbying activity in the 1970s-1980s*. [interview] (Personal communication, 2 April, 2013; record retained for reference)

“until concrete measures have been taken to ameliorate the situation of minorities in that country”, they did not succeed in suspending the MFN status.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, this first trial brought together the core group of the most enthusiastic, young, fluent-in-English, second generation Hungarian-Americans, who were familiar with American politics, and were ready to act.<sup>46</sup> In the same year, CHRR organized a demonstration in front of the Romanian UN-mission, which was followed by other demonstrations in the following years. Moreover, advertisements were regularly published in the *New York Times* reporting the repressive nature of Ceausescu’s regime.<sup>47</sup> As it turns out from Ludanyi’s analysis, the HHRF realized that demonstrations are only of secondary importance to achieve their objective, because “they are supplemental to psychologically mobilize the committed support (...) and to draw media attention to the problem”<sup>48</sup>, and thus the HHRF began to concentrate its activities on decisionmakers. This meant the consistent presentation of oral testimonies as well as written statements both in the Senate and the House of Representatives on hearings about Romania’s MFN status from 1976 until 1987. As Ludanyi claims, although the annual renewal of Romania’s MFN status became almost a habitual action of the executive, HHRF did not give up and consistently lobbied both Houses. Moreover, HHRF targeted those Congressmen that were thought to be sympathetic to the issue of suspension of the MFN status. Ludanyi adds that during election years, HHRF launched letter-writing campaigns, phona-thons, and organized “meetings with delegations from their home constituencies. These tactics were particularly effective in campaigns which took place in Connecticut, New Jersey and Ohio, where the size of the Hungarian-American constituency is above the 100,000 mark”.<sup>49</sup> Ed Koch’s (Congressman, Mayor of New York City 1977-1989) reminiscence of HHRF’s lobbying efforts confirms the organization’s commitment.

“On May 7, 1976, I opened *The New York Times* in my office on Capitol Hill and saw a full-page advertisement paid for by the

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<sup>45</sup> CHRR Announcement cited by Ludanyi, 1990, p.82

<sup>46</sup> Ludanyi, 1990, pp.80-81

<sup>47</sup> Hámos, 2013

<sup>48</sup> Ludanyi, 1990, p.83

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

Committee for Human Rights in Romania. The ad recounted acts of repression by Nicolai Ceausescu, the Communist dictator of Romania. My interest was piqued, and I wrote a letter to the Committee asking for more information. Congress was scheduled to renew Romania's "Most Favored Nation" status which would allow it special trade benefits and was, as I recall, the only Communist country to be so favorably treated. The leaders of the human rights organization came to see me in Washington. (...) He explained that ethnic Hungarians living in Romania were not accorded full citizenship rights and were persecuted by the Romanian government. The most glaring example was in the field of education. (...) [T]he government was not providing that constitutional right to Hungarians, whereas any student, even if only one, requested education in Romanian, it was provided. There were other acts of discrimination, as well. The committee pointed out the Romanian government was vulnerable to pressure on human rights from the United States because the most favored nation status for Romania was then before the Congress for renewal. I agreed to help..."<sup>50</sup>

Two issues were of primary concern to me; first, whether HHRF was helped or trained by any other interest group in the first years, and second, who were those Congressmen who sympathized with the issue, for I was unable to find the answers to these two questions in the literature. László Hámos confirmed that their organization was set up completely on an ad-hoc basis, and neither in 1975 nor later did they turn to any interest group to model their organizational structure. As Hámos put it, the 1970s were the time when ethnic interest groups began to seek influence on American decisionmakers, so basically there were no real models to follow. He explained that all they could "learn" from were the radical demonstrations against the Vietnam War in the 1960s, the human rights movement of Afro-Americans, and the Carter administration's commitment to human rights. Therefore, they should be considered a grassroots organization which had to learn all by itself how lobbying works in real life.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> HHRF, 2007

<sup>51</sup> Hámos, 2013

Concerning the tactics of lobbying, focus was on the already mentioned demonstrations, letter writing campaigns and presentation of written statements. Hámos recalled that Ed Koch, (cited above) who was Hámos's representative in his congressional district at that time, was invited to the first demonstration of HHRF in 1976, and although Koch did not attend the demonstration, he read the advertisement of HHRF in the New York Times and started to support the idea of suspending Romania's MFN status on the basis of human rights violation. He even delivered a speech in which he called upon the Romanian government to react to the charges. Hámos also mentioned that the HHRF continuously sent letters to Congressmen in which they called attention to the human rights violations of Ceausescu's regime. Analogously, each year, more and more Congressmen signed the letter of HHRF in order to support the suspension of Romania's MFN status. Another tool to convince Congressmen about the need to suspend Romania's MFN status was the letter writing campaign. Since Hungarian-Americans live rather dispersedly in the USA, you can find Hungarian-Americans in virtually every congressional district. Therefore, all Congressmen regularly received letters on the topic, signed by their voters of Hungarian ancestry. Therefore, as Hámos put it, the dispersion of Hungarian-Americans in this case meant an advantage.<sup>52</sup>

However, the political atmosphere did not favor the objectives of HHRF at all, since Ceausescu's Romania was the favored state of the U.S. from the Eastern European bloc. Moreover, the minority situation of Hungarians in Transylvania was completely unfamiliar to the American public. Furthermore, economic interest groups, as well as the State Department were definitely against the suspension of Romania's MFN status and saw the possible suspension as a threat to their interests. Besides, religious organizations did not stand for the goal either; although religious freedom was evidently not ensured in Romania, that these organizations cooperated with the Romanian authorities and campaigned for the maintenance of the MFN status in Congress, Hámos claimed. The only interest group that more or less shared the aims of HHRF was the Center for Russian and East European Jewry led by Jacob Birnbaum; this organization fought for

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

the protection of Jewish emigrants. Although their original aim was only to guarantee the free emigration of Jews, later on an agreement was reached between the two organizations, according to which they mutually supported each other's aims. In the interview, Hámos also referred to certain persons from President Carter's administration with whom HHRF had developed good relations, as well as human rights organizations like Amnesty International, Freedom House, and Helsinki Watch.<sup>53</sup>

An interesting feature of HHRF's lobbying efforts was the case of Republican Senator Jesse Helms, who picked up the story already in the first years. He proposed to back the initiative of HHRF and guaranteed the signature of 9 senators for the HHRF letters in the Congress. He wanted, in return, to incorporate the issue of the Hungarian minority in Romania in his political program. Hámos and his companions, although Helms' proposal was very attractive, decided not to agree on this condition, because they insisted on keeping the issue beyond political parties. Despite the refusal, Helms still supported the initiative later on, and in 1987, at the time of the suspension of the MFN status, he backed the suspension during the congressional debate.

Finally, the decision on Romania's MFN status in 1987 was associated with Congressman Frank Wolf, who drafted the amendment that made it possible to suspend the favorable commercial conditions of the country. Wolf seemed to be concerned about human rights, especially religious freedom in Romania, therefore he was a potential decisionmaker to be lobbied by HHRF. Hámos confirmed that Wolf was one of the first Congressmen who they approached with their intention to suspend Romania's MFN status on the grounds of Ceausescu's repressive human rights policies. Hámos also implied that HHRF had a certain role in Wolf's decision to travel to Romania (see below). However, Hámos emphasized that those were Wolf's like-minded colleagues, Chris Smith and Tony Hall, who were even more conscious about the issue and more receptive of HHRF's agenda, and, according to Hámos, their role was even more important than Wolf's in the developments of the case.<sup>54</sup> Still, the spokesperson for the suspension of Romania's MFN status was Frank Wolf.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Certainly, besides the efforts of HHRF, other features contributed to the suspension of Romania's MFN status as well. During the 1980's, human rights violations and the antidemocratic features of Ceausescu's regime slowly became evident for the international community. Ludanyi notes that Károly Király's revelations of 1978, the resignation of U.S. Ambassador Funderburk to Romania in 1985, and the publication of Ion Mihai Pacepa's *Red Horizons*<sup>55</sup> in 1987 all contributed to the international realization of the repressive nature of Ceausescu's regime.<sup>56</sup> In the United States, three – already mentioned – Congressmen, Frank Wolf, Chris Smith and Tony Hall, who were deeply committed to human rights and religious freedom, decided to personally look into the alarming reports on Romania. They travelled to Romania in 1985; during their journey, they visited government officials, churches, as well as Christian communities which had to practice their religion secretly. Moreover, they met some Hungarians as well, and they learnt about the repression of national minorities in the country. Wolf mentions Géza Pálfi, a Roman Catholic priest, as an example, who was arrested and beaten because he declared in one of his speeches that Christmas Day should be a holiday, not a labor day. As Wolf reports in his book, the experiences of that journey made them work for the suspension of the MFN status of the country back in the U.S.,<sup>57</sup> which was realized only in 1987 by the adoption of the Wolf Amendment. Frank Wolf describes in his book his and his colleagues' efforts to let other American politicians know the truth about Romanian human rights policy and the real face of Ceausescu's regime. As he recalls, it was not an easy task at all. "The business community was instantly up in arms, and the Reagan administration came out against us, as did the State Department and leaders of both parties of Congress. And we were right about the attitude of certain members and senators who had traveled to Romania, where they had attended receptions and were treated very well; they received a false impression that everything was going swimmingly in Romania. (...)

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<sup>55</sup> Ion Mihai Pacepa, a Romanian political exile in the U.S., revealed the methods of Ceausescu's intelligence service in *Red Horizons*.

<sup>56</sup> Ludanyi, 1990, p.84

<sup>57</sup> Wolf, F. 2011. *Prisoner of Conscience: One Man's Crusade for Global Human and Religious Rights*. Zondervan pp.29-38.

We had a long, hard fight to pass out bill.”<sup>58</sup> The amendment aimed “to suspend Most-Favored-Nation status for Romania, and to provide for a review every six months of such status. Following the review, the President may reinstate Romania’s MFN status if he determines and certifies to Congress that Romania has made significant progress in granting freedom to emigrate and other political and religious freedoms”.<sup>59</sup>

The difficulties of Wolf and his companions to get the Wolf Amendment through was described by a contemporary report as well. Critics of the Wolf amendment claimed that, “by restricting Romanian exports and thus further weakening the country’s already depressed economy, the US would only be hurting the very people it is trying to help”.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, both American importers and exporters would be hurt with the suspension of the preferential trade agreement. Opposition to the Wolf Amendment was expressed by those who thought that “there’s been more emigration to the US - considerably more - than there would have been without MFN,” as well. The dilemma was expressed by an expert on Romania as follows: “If you don’t take [MFN] away people think you’re bluffing; if you do take it away, you’ve shot the only bullet in your gun”.<sup>61</sup> Obviously, the issue of Romania’s MFN status belonged to the larger context of the Cold War, and therefore it carried an important message to the Soviet Union. As noted earlier, the provisions of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment focused on emigration policies, and thus, human rights in general were only implied in the bill. Therefore, whether to extend the provisions to “human rights” in general was another dilemma, especially because it could have a disincentive effect both in Romania and in the Soviet Union concerning the amelioration of their emigration policies. “We know we can’t filter out other [human rights] considerations, but we need to make it clear [to the Soviets] that as soon as they meet emigration quotas we won’t change the ground rules”, Moffett cites an official. All in all, as Moffett concludes, Romania “has become a perennial test of the United States human

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<sup>58</sup> Wolf, 2011, pp.39-40

<sup>59</sup> Wolf Amendment, 1987

<sup>60</sup> Moffett, 1987

<sup>61</sup> Cited by Moffett, 1987



rights policy”, that is, whether ‘Realpolitik’ can overwrite democratic principles.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, democratic principles conquered economic interests in 1987 with the adoption of the Wolf Amendment. Wolf implies in his book that the turning point was his meeting with President Reagan; at that point the President realized that human rights conditions were much worse in Romania than in the Soviet Union<sup>63</sup>, although MFN status had been given as a reward for Romania for its relative independence from the Soviet Union. So, Reagan proposed the suspension of Romania’s MFN status, which was later approved by both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

As we can see, many factors contributed to the success of HHRF in achieving the suspension of Romania’s MFN status. Although the efforts of the Hungarian-American organization cannot be questioned, the changes in the perception and judgment of the Ceausescu regime made it easier to convince the American politicians of their responsibility in influencing human rights conditions in a country awarded with preferential commercial status. Moreover, the role of Frank Wolf, who acted as the spokesperson in the whole issue, cannot be disregarded either. László Hámos told me in the interview that the HHRF intentionally wanted to remain almost invisible in the story, and this is the reason why Frank Wolf does not say a word about the organization’s potential role in turning his attention to Romania<sup>64</sup>. (Neither does he name other organizations he worked with on his journey to Romania; he only mentions churches and the Christian Solidarity International.) In their report in 1987, HHRF declared that the efforts of Hungarian-American organizations and the actions of Hungarian-Americans who took part in the letter-writing campaigns and phonatons contributed greatly to the success<sup>65</sup>. It would have been worth looking into the written statements or the letters written by the HHRF to Congressmen, but unfortunately, primary sources of the HHRF lobby between 1976 and 1987 are not processed and archived, therefore many aspects of the issue still wait for future researchers.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Wolf, 2011, p41

<sup>64</sup> Hámos, 2013

<sup>65</sup> HHRF, 1987

If we examine this case study with the help of the existing literature on ethnic lobbies, we can draw very interesting conclusions. The criteria set by political scientists are the following: financial resources (campaign financing); organizational body articulating clear demands, mobilizing their constituents and building alliances with other groups; organizational strength; membership unity, placement, and voter participation; salience and resonance of the message; pushing on an open door; oppositionless issues; permeability of and access to the government; mutually supportive relationship between the ethnic group and the decisionmaker. The Hungarian Human Rights Foundation was an organization formed by a group of young Hungarian-American, who were driven by enthusiasm and commitment to their kin-minorities rather than by political interest. Their organizational structure was not clearly defined in the years discussed in the thesis, so we can state that the criterion of *organizational strength* was not really appropriate for the HHRF. The possible *financial resources* of the HHRF could not possibly be attractive for American politicians either. The ability to *mobilize its constituencies* and to *build alliances* with other interest groups seems to be partly valid for the HHRF, since they were successful in mobilizing Hungarian-Americans for the letter-writing campaigns, and they could work together with the Center for Russian and East European Jewry. The same can be said about the criterion of *membership unity, placement, and voter participation*; although Hungarian-American organizations are divided, the human rights conditions of minority Hungarian communities was an issue that was important for all Hungarian-Americans, regardless of their political heritage, therefore it could mobilize the whole community.<sup>66</sup> Again, voter participation possibly has counted, since Hungarian-Americans live dispersedly in the United States, their voice may matter for many representatives. I believe that the criterion of *salience and resonance of the message* was complete, because the HHRF's argumentation based on human rights fitted well into the American public and political discourse as well. However, since the HHRF had to face a very strong opposition in their case, neither the condition of *pushing on an open door*, nor the promotion of *oppositionless issues* was

<sup>66</sup> Hámos, 2013

true for the HHRF lobby activity. The criterion of *permeability of and access to the government* is evident, but it is due to the system of the American polity rather than to the skillfulness of an interest group. Finally, no *mutually supportive relationship between the ethnic group and the decisionmaker* was established, therefore I would say that this criterion was not realized either.

As a conclusion we can say that the case study of the success of the HHRF further reinforces the hypothesis, namely that the existing literature on the criteria of ethnic lobby success is not exhaustive enough; many other factors influence the outcome of a lobby, while some expectations may become irrelevant depending on the actual situation. In the case of the HHRF we saw that the gradual change in the judgment of Ceausescu's regime and the role of Congressman Frank Wolf and his colleagues as spokesmen of the issue were of crucial importance besides the tough lobbying activity of HHRF to achieve the suspension of Romania's MFN status. The case study reveals precisely that the success of an ethnic lobby is rather unpredictable; we might even say that it is almost accidental, and the criteria set by political scientists should be considered only as starting points, not as the key factors to success.

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# History



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Ágnes Mándityné Zsifkovics

## Croats in the city of Pécs at the end of the 17th century

The most detailed report on the various groupings of the inhabitants of the City of Pécs has been provided by the tax census carried out on imperial-royal regulations on the 28<sup>th</sup> December 1698. It consists of the data of 637 heads of households. The original written in Latin is in the Archive of Vienna. Mihály Földvári (Feiler), writer and journalist, the vice archivist of Baranya County (from the 1890s to 1904) prepared a Hungarian translation of it, that has been preserved in the Archive of Baranya County No. IV. 1003.d., with the title of 'Register of the inhabitants of the City of Pécs 1698'. The data of the 637 heads of households are the first giving account of the nationality of the persons registered and thus could serve as a starting point to the research of the history of the nationalities in Pécs.

Hungary has been present on the map of Europe as a multiethnic country during its history and although it lost this feature after Trianon, different nationalities – as different censuses prove – still exist within its boundaries. The distribution of nationalities and the number of people within each ethnic group was measured on the occasions of censuses of the population. The first census which also provided data on ethnographical distribution was held in 1850-'51 and from 1870 censuses on an official scale took place in every ten years. The question related to one's mother tongue, which is one of the most adequate in relation to national identity, has been a part of the questionnaires only since 1880. The direct question of one's national identity has become a part of the questionnaire even later in 1941 but since then with the exception of the year 1970 it is regularly amongst the questions to be answered.

The fact that in 1997 one of the discourses of Kisebbségkutató Műhelybeszélgetés (Workshop on Minority Studies) with the title of *Nemzetiségeink és a statisztika* (*Our Nationalities and Statistics*) also

took it into its topics signs the question's relevance. The since then many times quoted fact was also passed on that discourse, namely that in the past three hundred years several nationalities existed simultaneously in Hungary 'generally in peace or sometimes quarrelling, but the conflicts between different nationalities with tragic consequences - for which there can be found plenty examples in other regions of Europe - have left Hungary intact. One of the most important corner-stones of mutual respect is to know each-other, to know and recognize our own and the members of other nationalities' feelings, values, culture, interests and concerns. The state has to play a leading role in this process. The precondition of participation is the knowledge of the ethnic composition of Hungarian society, the registration of capitation of ethnic minorities and exploration of their major demographical features.'<sup>67</sup>

Croats in Hungary constitute the third largest minority group amongst the thirteen national or ethnic minorities in the country today. Their estimated number is between eighty and ninety thousand which diverges significantly from the officially registered data. The divergence can have many causes.<sup>68</sup> One of the most apparent explanations is that many persons hid their real identity as a consequence of the forced usage of the terms 'Southern Slavs' or 'Yugoslavs' etc. in the past one-hundred years. Examining the concept of national minority, Nicola Girasoli emphasizes: 'A national minority is a group within a state which is less in number than the rest of the population and not in a dominant position, and whose members had detached from their homeland due to historical events but preserved their religious, linguistic and cultural features and strive to maintain themselves and to reach equal rights as the majority of the society both literally and by the law, and they respect the sovereignty of the state they belong to.'<sup>69</sup>

Similar thoughts were articulated by the LXXVII / 1993 law on the rights of national and ethnic minorities: '...national and ethnic minority is every group of people that have been living in the terri-

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<sup>67</sup> Zoltán Czibulka, 1997. *Nemzetiségeink és a statisztika. Kisebbségkutatás* 1. sz. Budapest.

<sup>68</sup> Zoltán Czibulka, 1997. *Nemzetiségeink és a statisztika. Kisebbségkutatás* 1. sz. Budapest.

<sup>69</sup> Nicola Girasoli, 1995. *A nemzeti kisebbségek fogalmáról*. Akadémia Kiadó, Budapest.



tory of Hungary at least for hundred years and numerically exist in minority compared to the whole population, whose members are Hungarian citizens and the group is distinguished by the rest of the population by their mother tongue, culture and traditions and bears evidence of such ethnical or national consciousness of inheritance which tends towards the preservation of these features and the articulation and protection of the interests of their communities’.

The city of Pécs is one of the most important intellectual and cultural centres of Croats in Hungary. The ancestors of Croats living in Pécs today arrived to the territory of Baranya County in the third phase of the immigration of Croats between the years of 1686 and 1690. ‘Their immigration to Baranya after the expulsion of the Turks was also urged by the feudal lords in order to acquire proper workforce for their reoccupied territories.’<sup>70</sup>

Roman Catholic Croats fleeing in most desperate times from the Turks moving out mainly from the eastern and central regions of Bosnia were warmly welcomed by the inhabitants of the area and in return they stayed faithful to religion, Church, country and their fellow citizens. The newly immigrated Croats accomplished significant achievements on religious, economic and cultural fields, too.<sup>71</sup> Their immigration and resettling, the new composition of population still bears a significant effect on the everyday life of the city and its surroundings.

When the Turks after the lost battle of Nagyharsány had left Baranya for good, the first assignee of the Chamber of Pécs District, Christian Vincens considered the assessment of population and property relations as his prime task. The first censuses were unsuccessful as many fled from the questioners. The fact that Vincens spoke nor Hungarian neither Croatian just aggravated the resultlessness and thus many data were recorded improperly.

‘In the restoration of County administration the nomination of count János (Iván) Draskovich to the position of Under-sheriff on the 31th December 1688 meant the first step’.<sup>72</sup> After his death in 1692

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<sup>70</sup> György Sárosác, 1990. *A Pécs környéki bosnyákok története, gazdasági és társadalmi életük*. Dodola, Baranya Megyei Tanács Nemzetiségi Bizottsága, Pécs

<sup>71</sup> Stjepan Sršan, 1993. *Baranja*,. Matica hrvatska, Osijek.

<sup>72</sup> Imre Ódor (szerk.), 1996. *Baranya megye évszázadai [1000-1918], A magyar honfoglalás 1100. évfordulója tiszteletére. Tanulmányok és források Baranya megye történetéből* 3. Baranya Megyei Levéltár, Pécs.

the title of Under-sheriff further remained with a Croatian nobleman as it was conferred on his son Péter Draskovich.

The most detailed data on the composition of the population of Pécs is contained by a tax census carried out on the orders of a decree issued by the Imperial Royal Committee on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December 1698. The report contains the particulars of 637 householders in Pécs and its original copy written in Latin can be found in the Archives of Vienna. The Hungarian translation of the report was carried out at the turn of the century by Mihály Földvári (Feiler) teacher and journalist, the vice-archivist of Baranya County from 1890 to 1904 and is kept in the Archives of Baranya County with the title of *Pécs város népösszeírása (Census of the Population of Pécs)* No.1003.d / IV/ 1698. The particulars of the aforementioned 637 householders are the first records which give the opportunity to conclude on the nationality of the persons registered, thus the document can be seen as the foundation and starting point of a research on nationalities in Pécs.

This census shed light on the demographic features of the population, the presence and economic role of the Croats. The presence of the Croats is well proved by their oath on the exclusiveness of Roman Catholic faith 'which oath was accepted by all the three tongued folks (the Hungarians, the Germans and the Rascians) of the city of Pécs'.<sup>73</sup> In case we can accept Sršan's definition that under the name Rascian (a *name generally used for people with Serb origin – trans.*) we are to understand the immigrant Croats, then it becomes obvious that that these 'Rascians' were Roman Catholics. After Sršan: 'These Roman Catholics who immigrated to Hungary under various names such as Slavs, Illyrs, Bosnians, Šokci, Bunjevci, even Rascian were all Croats by their nationality which is best supported by their religious persuasion contrary to the Serbs who in the mass belong to the Orthodox Church.'<sup>74</sup>

From a different approach: "In the 16th century, the influx of Slavic population from the Balkans had begun particularly with the

<sup>73</sup> Ferenc Váradi (szerk.), 1896-1897. *Baranya múltja és jelenje I. II.*, Pécs.

<sup>74</sup> Stjepan Sršan, 1999. Doseljenja Hrvata u Podunavlje pod vodstvom franjevac do sredine 18. stoljeća. *Glasnik*, Arhiva Slavonije i Baranje 5., Osijek.

Serbs who belong to the Greek Church, Muslims and Roman Catholic Bosnians (on their joint name at that time the: Rascians)”.<sup>75</sup>

According to a survey on the knowledge of the office-bearers of the Council carried out between 1780 and 1790, out of 26 officials 8 spoke Croatian and an additional 6 ‘the four languages prevailing here’ i.e. also the Croatian language. Although some of the officials did not name the language they spoke, but their surnames refer to their possible command of the Croatian language: György *Mestrovics*, András *Ranics*, József *Kovacsics*.<sup>76</sup>

It is not without reason to ask how it is possible to determine the ethnical composition of the population based on the data of different censuses. Since nationality is not always indicated separately on the sheets, the analyses of surnames remains the only way to determine it as the mixing of different ethnic groups was almost unprecedented in that time. The era in question was more characterized by the antagonism of nationalities so the former mentioned method presumably brings reliable results.<sup>77</sup>

The tax census in 1698 contains the particulars of 637 householders. Only the names of taxable, adult, males were recorded, or in case of the householder’s death, the name of his widow. The recorded data give us a detailed picture about the agriculture of the families: about their livestock, the size of their lands, their tax paying but concerning their religion, origin or nationality, the census is incomplete for a contemporary eye. Such data is indicated only in 166 cases according to which: 81 + 4 persons were German, 51 persons were Hungarian, 29 persons were Croat, 1 person was Serb. Religion, origin and the name could refer to the missing data on national identity of the inhabitants. The least complicated task is to identify the Serbs, as their religion is indicated next to their names almost with no exception and this seems appropriate to define their national identity.

<sup>75</sup> János Varga J., 1998. *A 17. század demográfiai viszonyai, A Kárpát-medence etnikai és demográfiai viszonyai a honfoglalástól a török kiűzéséig*. Janus Pannonius Tudományegyetem, Pécs 1998.

<sup>76</sup> Mária Anna Móró – Imre Ódor, 1996. *A felszabadult város 1686-1867. Pécs ezer éve. Szemelvények és források a város történetéből*. Pécs.

<sup>77</sup> István Taba, 1941. *Baranya megye népessége a XVII. sz. végén*. Baranya Vármegye Közönsége, Pécs.

There is not enough room here to enumerate all those who can be judged as Croats after their names one by one so the following summarizing chart contains the demographical data of Pécs reflective to the 1698 census:

| Time of immigration | Origin of Population |                 |         |       |         |       |
|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
|                     | Bosnia               | Croat-Slavonian | Hungary | Other | Unknown | Total |
| unknown             | 3                    | 8               | 2       | -     | 7       | 20    |
| under Ottoman rule  | 6                    | 10              | 2       | -     | 27      | 46    |
| Born here           | -                    | 2               | -       | -     | 22      | 24    |
| Since youth         | 1                    | 1               | 1       | -     | -       | 3     |
| 1668.               | -                    | -               | 1       | -     | -       | 1     |
| 1675.               | 1                    | -               | -       | -     | -       | 1     |
| 1678.               | -                    | -               | -       | -     | 2       | 2     |
| 1683.               | 1                    | 2               | 1       | -     | 1       | 5     |
| 1684.               | -                    | -               | -       | -     | 4       | 4     |
| 1685.               | 3                    | 11              | 10      | -     | 13      | 37    |
| 1686.               | -                    | 2               | -       | -     | -       | 2     |
| 1687.               | -                    | 2               | -       | -     | -       | 2     |
| 1688.               | 2                    | 1               | 1       | 1     | 3       | 8     |
| 1689.               | 3                    | -               | -       | -     | 2       | 5     |
| 1690.               | 18                   | 6               | 3       | -     | 16      | 43    |
| 1691.               | 6                    | 5               | -       | -     | 10      | 21    |
| 1692.               | 7                    | 2               | -       | -     | 5       | 14    |
| 1693.               | 4                    | 7               | -       | 1     | 7       | 19    |
| 1694.               | 7                    | 7               | -       | 2     | 7       | 23    |
| 1695.               | 5                    | 3               | -       | -     | 1       | 9     |
| 1696.               | 7                    | 1               | -       | 1     | 4       | 13    |
| 1697.               | -                    | 2               | -       | -     | 1       | 3     |
| 1698.               | -                    | -               | 1       | -     | -       | 1     |
| total:              | 74                   | 72              | 22      | 5     | 135     | 308   |

According to the chart it is obvious that 43.83% of the population's origin is unknown and also that the majority of these inhabitants arrived to Pécs during the Ottoman rule or were born here. Taking into consideration the time of immigration it can be stated that the arrival of Croats can be divided into two major waves: before the liberation of the city (1685) and the early 1690s when massive

crowds of immigrants arrived from Bosnia and Syrmia which were still waging war.

The 1698 tax census gives a detailed picture on the economic circumstances of Croats in Pécs. One of the common features of their settling down is the ownership of house and land about which there are questions in the census. If we compare the economic circumstances of the 308 Croat householders with the economic circumstances of inhabitants with different nationalities (Hungarian, German, Serb, Greek) it can be said that the Croats owned small amount of land while their livestock was commensurate to the livestock of other nationalities and their main field of activities was viniculture.

| <b>Livestock of Croat population in comparison to the livestock of overall population</b> |                           |                                       |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|   | <b>Croats (308 pers.)</b> | <b>Overall population (637 pers.)</b> |
| horse   | 94                        | 207                                   |
| ox  | 203                       | 823                                   |
| cow   | 240                       | 490                                   |
| calf  | 213                       | 367                                   |
| sheep   | 162                       | 354                                   |
| pig   | 79                        | 159                                   |
| donkey  | 70                        | 108                                   |
| beehive   | 69                        | 282                                   |

| <b>Owned land of Croat population in comparison to owned land of overall population</b> |                            |  |
|---|----------------------------|--|
|   | <b>Croats (308 person)</b> | <b>Overall population (637 person)</b> |
| vineyards   | 831 hoers                  | 1577 hoers                             |
| plough-land   | 262,75 morgen              | 610 morgen                             |
| pasture-land  | 199,5 scythe-man           | 430 scythe-man                         |

The amount of taxes paid also show that the majority of immigrant Croats that time were craftsmen or merchants, as the transcripts of guild charters in Croatian indicate.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, we also have to mention that different summaries have been made about the 1698 census in consideration of the national identity of inhabitants. While, according to István Taba, 171 Hungarian,

<sup>78</sup> Árpád Somogyi, 1966. *Pécsi szláv őtvösök a XVII-XIX. században és céhlevelük*. Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve 1965, Pécs.

349 Slavic and 79 German householders lived in Pécs at that time, György Sárosácz puts the Slavs into different groups and talks about 325 Croat, 139 Hunagrian, 92 German, 53 Vlach and 28 Serb householders. Irrespective of either categorisation, the data on the agriculture and tax-paying of the population show that both the Croats and other nationalities contributed to the construction of their new homeland to a large extent. And it is also unquestionable that after the Turkish times the city gained its multiethnic character which it has proudly preserved until today.

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## **'Stories of those moving out' – Refugees of Trianon: Two contemporary descriptions and their analysis**

After World War I Hungary has lost two-thirds of its territory, one third of the Hungarian speaking population, most of its natural wealth of minerals, forests and its railway system was also disrupted; moreover, Hungary's remaining territory had to take care of 430 thousand displaced persons as well. Not only the members of the elite but also the general public were of the opinion that the personal and collective grievances could be best expressed in writing. The present essay analyses two novels: *Menekültek* [Refugees] by the today almost unknown Judit Beczássy, published in 1933, and *Urak, Úrfiak* [Gentlemen and young masters] by the still popular Rózsa Ignác.

Besides the apparent economical, political and territorial losses, Hungarian society had suffered long lasting and severe spiritual damage as a consequence of Treaty of Trianon as well.<sup>1</sup> Due to mostly political reasons, the digestion of losses and the exploration of consequences have been carried out imperfectly or have not been done at all in the last ninety years. Although several scholarly, issue-related writings came up in the last decade, only the minority of them were concerned with the Treaty's micro- social consequences.<sup>2</sup> It is true in spite of the fact that the effects of Trianon can possibly be best comprehended by examining the never apparent spheres of everyday life. It is ineludible to get acquainted with the social phenomena that are direct consequences of the Treaty and the change of empires in order to examine these social effects.

The refugee question is a widely-known although less examined issue related to the disintegration of historical Hungary. Besides the well

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to Gergely Kunt for his valuable and useful reflections.

<sup>2</sup> The writings of Miklós Zeidler, Csaba Csóti and Balázs Ablonczy are all exceptions.

known catchwords as „entrucked” or „clerks”, the fate and life conditions of those 430 000 refugees fled from successor states to Hungary following World War I and the Treaty of Trianon is scarcely known. This fact is even more puzzling since the majority of contemporaries were personally touched – most Hungarian families were involved in the matter – and they experienced those years as tragedy. Determinant actors of Hungarian elite all dealt with the subject and - depending on their personal worldview and attitude - they all expressed what the detached cities, lands and their memories ment to them.<sup>3</sup>

Not only the literary elite but also many other felt their imaginary or real, collective or personal grievances can be best expressed in writing. Thanks to this attitude, thousands of poems, short stories and plays were born, all of which gave certain answers - although mostly a very common one - to Trianon. Only a handful of these - known or little known - works of art concerns the issue of emigration and its complex aftermaths. We state this in spite of the fact that refugees and their families as characteristic figures of those times turn up in many works of art, however, besides the ones we review and examine here there is not any story particularly about them.<sup>4</sup> Even the historian István Weis called the attention to the lack of works dealing with this topic in his analytical work about Hungarian society in 1930.<sup>5</sup> As he noted, the massive crowd of people immigrating to Hungary after the decision of Trianon fundamentally influenced the everyday life of Hungary and of those Hungarian cities, towns and villages that accomodated them.<sup>6</sup> The issue of refugees did not only have an impact on the refugees’ personal lives with lost or temporarily lost existences, but on the social, economic, and cultural life of their new habitats, too. It would not be easy to define general characteristics that are true for all the settlements refugees found asylum in because of the differences within the flood of that almost half a million souls. We state this in spite of the fact

<sup>3</sup> Béla Pomogáts: *Querela Hungariae. Trianon és Magyar Irodalom*. Nyitott Könyvműhely, Budapest, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Rózsa Ignác: *Urak, úrfiak*. Budapest, 1985.; Judit Beczássy: *Menekültek*. Budapest 1933.

<sup>5</sup> István Weis: *A mai magyar társadalom*. Budapest, 1930.

<sup>6</sup> The participation in public life of refugees in Szepes settled down in Sátoraljaújhely provides a good example. More on the topic see: Gergely István Szűts: Öndefiníciós kísérletek a trianoni határon. Irredenta kultusz a két világháború közötti Sátoraljaújhelyen. In: Századvég (új folyam) 46. 2007/4. 41-70.(being published)



that by profession they seem to be homogenous at the first glimpse (the majority of them formerly were public servants or wore public offices), however, a closer examination shows that their existential differences were far more greater than one would think.

The heterogeneity of the jobholder middle class, the politics of the successor states, individual necessities and decisions make it impossible and maybe pointless to establish a model of refugees which could give explanation to this rather complex problem. It seems more appropriate to follow and understand the individual fate and difficulties of those who lost their former offices and tried to integrate into their new environment. Although the scale of emigration and social change was unquestionably enormous, only a few sources have been explored until today. This is one of the reasons why it is worth analyzing such literary products – two novels in our case – which give us examples for the phenomenon. The question whether a literary product about refugees' lives can ever be used as a source for historians obviously arises here. Can reality (if it really does exist) be examined through fiction? If we accept that every text, and a scientific work too, constructed by an author, is based on the individual interpretation of sources, the borderline between reality and fiction blurs and it seems more appropriate to use the concept of possibility as a real entity.<sup>7</sup> Thus a literary product can also be interpreted as a possible explanation instead of a solely existing fiction. To put it concisely, a literary product is also able to be seen as a potential source because its author can never be independent from the historical context, so the narrative constructed can be considered as a footprint of the era in question. Carrying on with this chain of ideas, the choice of topic, the characters and their relation to the narrated issues in the story will become of crucial importance. It comes natural then that not only the story but all the impressions it is based on will prove to be important sources.

Thus, the novels chosen by us will give the opportunity to gain information on the refugee question because it plays central role in them and in contemporary discourses based on the experiences of their authors. So we reckon that not only the dialogues in the novels but the characters, scenes and the way of their representations are all truly revealing.

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<sup>7</sup> Gábor Gyáni: Történelem és regény. A történelmi regény In: *Tiszatáj* 2004. 4. szám 78.-92.

## Refugee question

Based on the report of Országos Menekültügyi Hivatal (OMH) (National Office for Refugee Affairs - NORA) in 1924, 350 thousand refugees arrived to Hungary from the successor states between November 1918 and December 1923.<sup>8</sup> The Hungarian government established its formal authority over the coordination of refugees' affairs in spring 1920 and the first great wave of immigrants arrived to the country more than one and a half year later, but we have to bear in mind that those who illegally crossed the border are not recorded in the files, therefore it seems more appropriate to count with a far greater number, approximately 430 thousands. In spite of the huge difference (almost one hundred thousand) in the numbers of the refugees, the report of NORA is still to be considered as an important source because, as far as we know, the numbers given by it are the only macro level database until today. Based on the report it seems obvious that nearly two thirds of the bread-winners arriving to Hungary were formerly state or private employees.<sup>9</sup> The country was in a deep crisis due to the lost war, revolutions, internal and external conflicts, therefore it was not able to provide this huge amount of people with jobs or lodgement. Neither the offices of the state, counties, nor the offices of towns were able to employ and accomodate this well and partly well qualified crowd of officials who together with their families meant more than three hundred thousand people. These causes led to that common experience of the time that the formerly highly recognized refugees took up jobs never imaginable before and settled down in places they never ever would have chosen before simply because of existential reasons. Clearly, the restart of life did not cause such hardships for all. The community of refugees was significantly differentiated, so the change was rather sweet for

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<sup>8</sup> The Országos Menekültügyi Hivatal (National Office for Refugees Affairs) was established on 16th April 1920 to coordinate refugees arriving from successor states and to take care of their lodgement and boarding. After its 1924 abolishment the affairs of refugees were handled by the Ministry of Welfare and Labour. For more information on NORA see Emil Petrichevich-Horváth: *Az Országos Menekültügyi Hivatal négyéves működéséről*. Budapest, 1924.

<sup>9</sup> From the 350.000 persons registered by NORA 104.804 were breadwinners and 245.196 were dependents. From breadwinners 44.253 were formerly state employees and 24.473 worked in the industry or trade. Petrichevich-Horváth 1924. 37.

those who possessed considerable wealth and had sound connections. A warm home and featherbed waited for some of them even in the moments of their flight or a couple of days after their arrival.

It is peculiar that the main characters of the novels also belong to that envied social class for which it was relatively easy to tide over the change of regimes, thanks to their status and connections. But the majority of refugees suffered a severe and long lasting moral and material loss. Most of them were not able to establish a new existence relying on their wealth they had left at home, partly carried with them or which has never existed. Seeing the irresolvable tension in social and economic relations caused by continuously arriving waves of refugees and the need for stable Hungarian communities beyond the border articulated in the Hungarian revisionist politics, the Hungarian government decided in October 1920 to officially keep emigration under control.<sup>10</sup> From that date permission to reside was only possible in case of family reunion, already started studies or verifiable expulsion. The decree did not stop emmigration entirely as it allowed refugees to settle down in case of real coercion but tried to prevent the emmigration of those who wanted to leave the successor states only in hope for a better life. Our protagonists in the novels were not affected by this restriction but there are other characters who had not arrived from Transylvania to the capital because of real coercion.

### **Novels of refugees**

The first writing about refugee question appeared in 1933 by the today almost unknown writer Judit Beczássy. Beczássy was born in Szeged, 1888 with the name of Katalin Szobotka as the daughter of Calvinist parents, the engineer Rezső Szobotka and his wife Júlia Beczássy. Unfortunately, we know little about the Szobotkas but it is certain that the father worked for the City Council as an engineer and hired a flat for his family in the building of Postapalota (Palace of Post Office)

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<sup>10</sup> On the proposal of István Bethlen, director of NORA the National Assembly decided on the legal foundation of settling on the basis of edict No. 8352/1920 issued on 23rd October 1920.

in Széchenyi Square.<sup>11</sup> Beczássy finished her elementary school studies in the city, but earned her teacher degree in the neighbouring city of Szabadka. She started her career as a newly graduated schoolmistress in Székelyudvarhely in 1911 where she met and soon became the wife of one of her colleagues Sándor Balázs (Breiner), a teacher of Latin and Hungarian languages and writer. Probably at the time of the Romanian invasion the couple gave up their former lives and moved to the capital city. We know just as little about their life in Budapest as about their life in Transylvania, and the reason for this is that the location of their bequest is still unknown. Based on the few available sources there is one thing we can know for sure: after their arrival to Budapest Sándor Balázs was employed by Verbőczy Grammar School in Krisztinaváros District. The enthusiastic writer and teacher is not mentioned in the history of Hungarian literature by the right of his novels or short stories but because he was one of the examiners at Attila József's (well-known Hungarian poet) entrance examination. Just like the protagonists of the novel, the couple lived in Buda, in District I so it is not surprising at all that Balázs was one of the regular guests of café *Philadelphia*, a well know venue in contemporary literary life.<sup>12</sup> From fragments of their personal records we also have knowledge of a critical period of the family's life with all its emotional and pecuniary hardships caused by one of their children's illness.<sup>13</sup>

Beczássy presumably chose her mother's name (a name common in Transylvania) as pen-name while living in the capital city before the publication of her first book instead of the Slavic sounding Szobotka. In a book review in *Erdélyi Helikon* sometime in the 1930s she is already mentioned as an offspring of an ancient Transylvanian family who could have been physically torn away from her roots by nothing else but the Great War.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Special thanks for Tibor Berta archivist in Szeged for registry data.

<sup>12</sup> Noémi Saly: A Krisztinaváros és a Philadelphia. *Budapesti Negyed*. 1996 2-3.szám

<sup>13</sup> Judit Beczássy wrote a personal letter to Oszkár Gellért to ask his help for her desperate family. We know nothing of the answer but her thanking letter to Mihály Babits allows us to think that Babits gave a helping hand to the family in need. Unfortunately the exact dates of the letters are not known in: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Kézirattár, *Babits Mihály iratai*. III/252-253.

<sup>14</sup> *Erdélyi Helikon* 1931. 2. szám

She wrote her first novel on the encouragement of his husband and it took only a few years for her to become at least a known if not well-known figure of Hungarian literary life. The fact that she was honourably mentioned on a literary competition organized by the book publisher Athenaeum in the first year and got a prize in the second year plays a significant role in her career. The recognition evoked a massive resound which was amongst others signed by the fact that Dezső Kosztolányi himself gave an appreciation on the columns of *Nyugat* of her novel *Tóth Eszter élete és halála* (Eszter Tóth's Life and Death) published in 1921.<sup>15</sup> The few letters available prove that Balázs and his wife were accommodated in the literary life of the capital.

She published ten books between 1920 and 1945 included *Menekültek* (Refugees) and up to her passing away in 1961 three of her novelettes came out. Her writing concerned with refugees of Trianon was published by Singer and Wolfner book publisher in 1933. Although she was not as well known as before by this time, a critique of the book came out in *Nyugat* by Aladár Schöpflin.<sup>16</sup> Schöpflin spoke about the significance of her book in describing the history of the era with real enthusiasm and true jubilation however, he was not as much content with its literary qualities. He mostly criticised the overdone ethical judgement that was immanent in the story and the far too typical character portrayal. It seems that a well-elaborated critique and a descriptive portrayal hand in hand with a continuous moral judgement of society characterize not only the novel in question but all her works between the two world wars. In spite of Schöpflin's and other book reviews in prominent daily papers, the novel could not evoke considerable interest although the title and subject were more promising.

It is also curious that Rózsa Ignác's name (author of the other novel) didn't become well-known in the Hungarian public discourse, although she was a relatively recognized writer in her lifetime. It can partly be explained by the fact that Ignác wrote the novel during World War II and it was published in 1947 on the eve of nationalisation only in a small number of copies without any advertisement. The well known and acknowledged authoress of the era was born in 1909 in Kovászna as a descendant of old Transylvanian families. Her ancestors, the Makkai-s

<sup>15</sup> *Nyugat* 1922. 4. szám

<sup>16</sup> *Nyugat* 1933. 9. szám.

in Enyed on her mother's side and paternally the Ignác-s from Csík moved to Szolnok- Doboka. Although she attended her schools in Transylvania and graduated from grammar school in 1928 in Kolozsvár she moved to Hungary in the same year. She graduated from Academy of Drama in Budapest and for the encouragement of her friends and relatives she began to write prose, too. She achieved her first literary success in 1937 with her novel *Anyanyelve Magyar* (Mother Tongue: Hungarian). She wrote the novel *Urak, Úrfiak* (Gentleman and Young Masters) discussed by us in 1943-44 a decade later than *Menekültek* (Refugees) was published. The book published in a small number of copies was reprinted after her death only in 1984, following many years of compulsory silence. The publisher in Csíkszereda which had issued her life-work earlier also published the book again in the recent past, but despite of its third-time edition, the novel still remained one of her less-known works.<sup>17</sup> This argument is supported by the fact that the Ignác Rózsa Emlékkönyv (Rózsa Ignác Memory Book) published in 2009 mentions the novel only concisely.<sup>18</sup> Despite this fact the Memory Book contains several pieces of indirect information from which the background and the possible causes of her choice of topic can be relatively easily explained. It also can be seen thus that the chosen locations, the characteristics and lives of the characters are packed with real and imaginary features. Similarly to Beczássy, Ignác also lived through the 1916 flight. Since she was a child that time, she remembers the few weeks long (for her) adventurous ordeal in an utterly different manner. The flight was a personal experience for both authors thus the choice of titles is worth a more close examination.

The message of *Menekültek* (Refugees) is obvious with a title as direct as this; it aimed to focus on the contemporaries' attention on all the tensions interlacing Hungarian society for a decade as consequences of the Treaty of Trianon. On the contrary, Rózsa Ignác was not concerned with the complex effects of the refugee question but only with the fate of a number of refugees and especially their attitudes. She talks about her motivations in the second edition of her book published in 1985 where she indicates that originally she

<sup>17</sup> Pro-Print Kiadó published the life-work series of Rózsa Ignác.

<sup>18</sup> Edited by László Neményi: *Rózsa Ignác (1909-1979) Memory Book*. Csíkszereda, 2009

wanted to give *Törtetők* (Go-getters) as title to her book referring to the predominancy politics of Transylvanian refugees and only after a long deliberation and with regard to the state of public affairs did she finally choose the less provocative *Urak, úrfiak* (Gentlemen and Young Masters), which refers to the story of two generations.

The choice of title, the leading motives, and the interpretation of events leading to the flight show a significant difference between the two writings. While Beczássy sees her protagonists as victims of Treaty of Trianon and exonerates them nearly from everything, Ignácz accuses certain refugees with sinful recklessness and with taking advantage of their situation. Not only their approaches to the question but also their analyses are different. Contrary to Ignácz, Beczássy discusses the trauma of refugees of Trianon and Hungarian middle-class in a shorter and less elaborated manner. Unlike Ignácz, who focuses on the everyday lives and integration of refugees living in Budapest, Beczássy chiefly emphasises the tragic features of the flight and its immanently encoded consequences. The cause of the differences between the two approaches might be that they lived through the trauma of Trianon in different circumstances. The almost one generation difference, the fact that one of them was a child at the time of the flight while the other one was already an adult, so the direct and indirect experience of belonging to a minority could altogether cause the different interpretations of the issue.

Moving backwards in time, the representation of events that evoked the flight and the way of leaving the homeland become fairly different in the two stories. The protagonists of Judit Beczássy, the members of the Deésy family were forced to flee from an unspecified settlement in Transylvania after the head of the family had been arrested by the Romanian authorities with the charge of capital treason. The father, Dénes Deésy Senior probably had led the office of the High Sheriff in one of the Districts of Csík County until the Romanian occupation in 1918. He was arrested and transported to Bukarest because of his participation in a would-be nation-wide underground movement after the following months of the change of empires which could not even evolve due to the Romanian attack. The trial was to be held in the autumn of 1919 at the court in Nagyszeben after his half-year detention in remand but owing to his wife's intercession he was allowed to return home for a few days without supervision until his

summoning. During the given time the family successfully smuggled the former High Sheriff out of Transylvania in a cattle-truck used for the transportation of repatriates. In other words, the protagonists of *Menekültek* (Refugees) acted under coercion and had to leave their homeland within a few days.

Unlike Beczássy's Deésy family from Székelyföld (Szekler Land), Rózsa Ignác built her narrative around the Göncze family originally from Fogaras County and the Bákody family living in Erzsébetváros. It is interesting to compare the choice of scenes and the social status of the characters. Both authors chose their own homelands or a settlement or region personally important for them or for their families as the scenes of their novels. Whilst Beczássy places her story to Szekler Land inhabited by an absolute majority of Hungarians, Ignác's narrative takes place in counties only dispersedly inhabited by Hungarians. Although the scenes are different, the social status of the characters is quite similar. They both place their protagonists on the ever-changing verge on upper- and middle-class: the High Sheriff Deésy, the large acred man László Göncze and Gerő Bákody, Erzsébetváros' Director of Public Prosecutions. Although they are similar characters, their differences in ethical questions get unraveled weeks or months after of the change of empires and in their everyday lives in the capital city. Rózsa Ignác placed the most crucial ethical dilemmas of Hungarians existing in a minority, the choice between personal and group interests, the question of staying or leaving into the focus of her narrative. In the spirit of the "Transylvanian thought" she opposes emigration based on personal interests, comfort and desire for a career to staying and persistence in the homeland. Even so, all of her characters leave their homeland in the end; some on their own will after the Romanian occupation and some by necessity in the middle of the 1920s. The *Urak, úrfiak* (Gentleman and young masters) gives a lively description of those coercive circumstances the Hungarian minority in Transylvania and most of all the former employees of the state had to face.

Beczássy's protagonists were even left without the dilemma, the possibility to choose; a conspiracy against a new state in those parlous times would have led to severe consequences. Thus the trauma caused by the violence of the successor states and the deprivation from free decision making can be seen as starting points. Although it is highly



likely that the Hungarian born political and administrative elite could not have found real alternatives to maintain their former existences, the suspension of their right to decide and the violent pressure they had to endure plunged them into a case of necessity. It was a common experience at that time since the newly governing power tried to get rid of the administrative class that had worked for the Hungarian state before. An oath of allegiance was demanded from those who were not expelled immediately, however, the majority settled upon the emigration driven by remonstrance, fear or hope. Although the interpretations of the problem differ, the basic features as existential crises caused by Trianon or the splitting families and outsliding careers are particularly present in both stories.

### **Environment**

The author reveals only a very little about the lives of Refugees at home. It is certain though that High Sheriff Deésy and his family used to live in a settlement somewhere in Transylvania where, besides his office, Deésy possessed considerable amounts of land and before their emigration they were able to sell their properties and the majority of their movables so successfully that they could live the life of the upper-class in the capital city for many years. We only got a picture through their fellow refugees in Budapest about their former social connections at home. In the capital Dénes Deésy mostly meets the members of the former County's elite but he was widely known for his self-maintenance at the time of change of empires, his imprisonment and character assassination. Due to his attempt to an open resistance, which made his name famous not only in Transylvania but also in the capital, he was able to restore the family's broken existence within a relatively short period of time. It is peculiar though that except for the householder's partly official connections he lacks friends and does not participate in any social movements that were so characteristic in the era. This is of course not accidental; as it was mentioned previously, above all the author emphasizes the tragedy, the disintegration of personal and communal connections.

Unlike Beczássy, Rózsa Ignác devotes a whole chapter to characterize Transylvanian circumstances. She writes about the short term

consequences of the change of empires, the way emigration influenced the lives of refugees and also of those who stayed at home in a much more detailed and sophisticated manner. She chose her husband's, János Makkai's hometown, Erzsébetváros with its pro-Hungarian but pointedly not only Hungarian born community in Kis-Küküllő County as the scene for the admittedly traumatic events of the change of rule.<sup>19</sup> One of the central characters of the story is Gerő Bákody, director of public prosecutions of the town until the Romanian occupation in 1918. As Ignác himself reveals, he is the only character in the novel whose characteristics were modeled after a real person, probably after her father-in law, Crown Attorney Dr Jenő Makkai. The newly organising rule discharges the well-respected Bákody who did not want to take part in the work of the Romanian Prosecution. His formerly higher-up friends made the same decision so after the refusal of the oath of allegiance not only the by then unemployed prosecutor but the former director of the court and the station-master also had to support their families by doing manual labour. The Hungarian elite of the ethnically heterogeneous town or at least the families pictured in the novel left the banks of Nagy-Küküllő river in august 1920. Thanks to the Romanian authorities' active assistance their journey - similarly to those of several hundred thousands of repatriates or optants - was not easy to realize.<sup>20</sup> The main reason for this was that neither the Romanian (mostly with the use of the carriages of the former Royal

<sup>19</sup> The city is mentioned in the novel as Ebes on a part of its name used until 1733. Erzsébetváros (Dumbraveni, Elisabethstadt) situated on the banks of Nagy-Küküllő river was counted as one of the centres of Armenians in Transylvania. Besides the Armenians the city was inhabited by Hungarians, Romanians, and Saxons. Due to the records of 1910 census from the 4408 inhabitants of the city 2613 were Hungarians, 940 were Romanians, 496 were German and 332 were Gipsy. The Armenians significantly responsible for the atmosphere of the city were not mentioned in the last census of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy due to the fact that the questions were related to the mother tongue and religion of the respondents and the by then almost entirely assimilated Roman Catholic Armenians avow themselves Hungarians.

<sup>20</sup> To be an optant meant the obligatory choice of citizenship. According to the paragraphs 61-66/VII of the Treaty of Trianon all formerly citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy who after the decision were out of the borders of Hungary lost their Hungarian citizenship. The decision gave the opportunity for all those adult (over 18) citizens to maintain their former status if they required it in the following year of the Treaty. It meant that they had to repatriate and make the decision on their citizenship within a year or a half depending on the successor states after the approval of the Treaty of Trianon on 26th July 1921.

Hungarian Railways) nor the Royal Hungarian Railways was able to provide enough carriages for the repatriates and their chattels. It often happened that Hungarians who had by that time already sold their properties were forced to camp for weeks on the sidetracks of the local railway station, staying in its stores or in rented flats.

The villa of Gerő Bákody found its new owner within no time after Bákody's emigration in the person of the new Romanian Director of Public Prosecutions. He could consider himself lucky as after the property had been sold he was allowed to stay in until the day of his journey. The endless bidding farewells, last meetings and card games all pictures this state of transition, the moments of leaving. The author personally experienced all this when her family moved from Kovászna to Fogaras in 1918 and their introductory visits were soon repayed by their hosts' visits of farewell. Repatriates got more and more envied amongst those staying in the ethnically mixed, quickly changing settlement, with the Hungarians in minority. It was true even if the many times perspectiveless and humiliating situation of the refugees in Hungary was already quite obvious by then. The Hungarian population of Ebes, i.e. Erzsébetváros had to continuously experience the feeling of loss and homelessness and not only on the day of the Bákody family's journey but during the following years as well. Most of those who took the road because of necessity or in the hope for a better life had to physically endure the feeling of homelessness for months or years and maybe emotionally until the end of their lives.

The other thread of the story leads us to a village purely inhabited by Romanians not far from Fogaras where until the autumn of 1918 the authority of the state was represented by the gendarmerie and by the lord, László Göncze and his family. By the time of change of empires the gendarmerie representing the Hungarian public administration had left the settlement but the head of the family decided to stay after returning from a two-year imprisonment. He and his actions symbolise everything that characterised the Transylvanian way of thinking and its famous representative minister László Ignác, the author's father, during the interwar period.

Just like the Ignács, and unlike his son Péter who emigrated to Budapest, László Göncze also wanted to stay and do everything he could for the people living in diaspora to ease the severe consequences caused by the decision at Trianon. He organized a school for children living in

the diaspora and as a Member of Parliament he raised the problems of Hungarians of the former Fogaras County to an official level. The fact that László Göncze operated a school for children in diaspora besides his work as an MP shows that the author's father, minister László Ignác inspired the portrayal of the character. After his untimely death his widow Máli Bákody and his daughter Rika left Transylvania and moved to Hungary. After her father's death, just like the character in her novel, *Róka* (Fox) i.e. *Rózsa Ignác* and her mother also moved to Budapest already packed with family members and friends.

### On the road

After the official announcement of their emigration High Sheriff Dénes Deésy and his family were waiting for the two freight cars allocated for them. It was a common practice that refugees were given two freight cars to store their goods in one and to temporarily accommodate themselves in the other one. The author reveals nothing about the journey of the family while fleeing from Transylvania as the reader only meets them again on the Hungarian-Romanian border but the ritual rescuing of the householder through the border as the final step of their flight is accurately detailed. The main reason for this is that the border here symbolizes the dividing line between security and insecurity. The act of crossing the border is such a physical and emotional event which drives the characters' lives onto a path that can only be left by those who lived through these hardships as a child. Being a refugee could have meant very different ways of life but fundamentally it was accompanied by a certain existential and above all moral crises. The characters of the story embody the models of the trauma of a refugee which, according to Aladár Schöpflin's review, are too simple and schematic explanations of this highly complex phenomenon.<sup>21</sup>

*Rózsa Ignác* also tells us nothing about the journey of Gerő Bákody and the fleeing Hungarians from Erzsébetváros in august 1920. Thus the passengers of the train finally leaving after weeks of waiting appear only several months later as the members of their now locally reorganized cultural society, the Ebes Association.

<sup>21</sup> Review of Aladár Schöpflin. *Nyugat* 1933. 9. szám.

### Life strategies in the capital city

After the arrival to the capital the concepts of the two novels show differences again. Whilst Beczássy chronologically carries on the narrative and focuses on the existential and moral questions of the recommencement, Ignác jumps forward in time and examines the characters already integrated or still struggling with the integration into the life of the capital city six years after. After almost a month-long journey, Beczássy's protagonists finally end up on one of the side-tracks of a railway station (possibly in Józsefváros) in Budapest. Instead of being a temporary place of short stay as usually, the station and the freight-cars ment home for most of the refugees that time and in the following years. It is not accidental that still today the best-known picture about the situation of refugees after Trianon is the one which informs us of the tragedy of families living on the side-tracks of railway stations. From spring 1919 on, real quarters came into existence on the railway stations of the capital and of bigger cities due to the constant shortages in housing and the increasing number of refugees. Some might lived in freight-cars, the physical embodiments of their existence as a refugee even for up to five years. According to the records of NORA, several times ten thousand people lived on the side-tracks of railway stations between the years of 1920 and 1924. The culmination of the situation was in summer 1921 when their number reached almost fifteen thousand. By 1924 this number significantly decreased but there were almost three-hundred in the capital city and two thousand five-hundred people in bigger cities who were still forced to live their lives in freight-cars.<sup>22</sup>

Unlike others, the Deésys, owing to their social connections and position, stayed „only” a couple of weeks on one of the railway stations in the capital city. Although the author did not devote a full chapter to them, the events depicting the everyday lives, problems and conflicts of people living in freight-cars turn up several times in the story. It seems that Beczássy paid a counscious attention to the historicity of the plot's backgrounds. This is confirmed by the representation of people living in freight-cars and their accurate portrayal. She detailledly writes about the main activity of their days, the search for acco-

<sup>22</sup> Petrichevich-Horváth 1924. 38.

modation, and the adaptiveness of the different types of people. In spite of their different possibilities, successes and resultlessnesses in their integration, it seems that the events happend to them remained uncomprehensible for a long time for refugees. It is all understandable if we keep in mind the fact that, in spite of the change of empires and the unstable political atmosphere, some of them had still lived their ordinary lives at home or at their posts merely a few months or weeks earlier. But of course there were some who gave up their several months long ambiguous situation in favour of the futurelessness after a long agony because it seemed more secure. These of course are all general characteristics which can only provide a certain frame in the stories about refugees.

As it was mentioned earlier, we are in the possession of a very little amount of information on the life conditions of refugees. Thus it is worth following the changes of housing conditions of the families in the novels. The Deésys, similarly to the colony in Erzsébetváros, arrived to the capital city in the summer of 1920 and it seems that they could adapt to the pace of the daily lives of other homeless refugees very soon. With the exception of the head of the family and the servant responsible for guarding the freight-cars, the family visited Pest's and Buda's warrens. Although the Housing Office established in 1917 should have taken care of the housing of refugees it was not able to fulfill its function due to the continuously increasing number of claimants and the already expensive housing shortage. The situation forced the refugees – as examples in Miskolc also show – seeking for empty flats, tenancies and other places suitable for moving in.<sup>23</sup> The Deésy family also followed this way when wandering around the Districts of the city; they tried to rent at least a small flat even without modern conveniences. After they had been searching for several weeks, finally they met old Steinerm, one of the most important characters of

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<sup>23</sup> Tens of thousands of refugees had arrived to Miskolc between the years 1919 and 1922 and finally around 3500-4000 people settled down permanently in the city. Similarly to Budapest the housing of such a crowd ment serious difficulties for the city. Therefore refugees tried to solve their accomodation individually or as a part of a smaller group which sometimes led to serious conflicts. On the crises of housing see: Gergely István Szűts: „A szükségalakások felét menekültek kapják...” Érdekkonfliktusok és előítéletek az 1920-as évek első felének lakásügyeiben Miskolcon. in: Korall (40.) 2010. 114-133.

the story, knocking on a door of a first floor flat in one of the warrens in Budapest. After their short and fruitless endeavouring, the Deésys, due to the unselfishness of this Jewish merchant, found themselves in a five bedroom villa on Rózsadomb (*an area inhabited by wealthy people in Buda – the trans.*) and they were able not only to rent but to purchase it from the money received for their country seat back in Transylvania. They found no other reason for Steiner's humane and nearly incomprehensible gesture than that the old man considered the former High Sheriff as a kind of national hero thus he offered the property acquired not long ago for himself on a favourable price.

By quickly reaching this new and successful existence, the family soon found itself in the everyday life of the capital city's top middle class and they even could easily assimilate to their new environment with the exception of the householder. Unlike the masses of other refugees, the now property owner householder, the former High Sheriff had no desire to fulfill a position and apparently it was not necessary for him by all means either. He was able to provide the financials needed for maintaining the living standards of the capital's elite from the money they received for their property in Transylvania and from certain honorariums. Their children could attend to the most renowned schools and, according to their social rank and following the fashion of the time, they played tennis and went rowing in their free time. Besides their old Transylvanian friends, soon the young members of the most important families in the capital paid a visit in their home on Wednesdays, the day assigned for receiving guests. The reader can follow the everyday life and integration of the Deésy family until the late 1920's so we are able to get a picture of the characters of both novels from the second half of the decade.

As it was mentioned earlier, Rózsa Ignác deliberately focuses on the generation of fathers and sons already after having accommodated themselves in the capital instead of the moments of arrival and initial difficulties. Thus she continues the story from the year 1926 with the exhibition of the specific sub-culture of social and political associations, groups and organisations run by refugees living in the capital city. Due to the lost war and also as a mean to protest against the Treaty of Trianon, numerous well-organized and nation-wide organisations and associations were formed whose members were mostly refugees. Some of these like MOVE (Hungarian National

Defence Association) and Revíziós Liga (Revisionist League) came into existence because of the collective losses and the trauma that afflicted the nation, while others as Szepesi Szövetség (Szepes Association) or the one in Ignác's novel, the Ebesiek Egyesülete (Ebes Association) were organized on the ground of common locality, or another one called Heimat because of the losing of old-homeland.<sup>24</sup> The threads of the story all lead to these official or non-official organisations run by refugees.

The intellectual leader of one of these groups was Péter Göncze who left Kolozsvár after its Romanian occupation in 1918, the son of László Göncze the landowner, who chose to stay in Transylvania. The young man in his early twenties becomes an important icon of the organization that assembled the young revisionist refugees during the following years. The movement led by him and the newspaper behind it with the expressive name 'Honfoglalás' (Conquest of the Homeland) mostly gathered emigrated university and college students, not counting few exceptions. The author follows the integration of these young folk without livelihood who had suspended their studies because of necessity, and - although in a less elaborated way, - the integration of their more successful fellow-sufferers.

After one and a half year the other protagonists of the novel, the prosecutor Gerő Bákody and his son follow Péter Göncze to Budapest. While the young Göncze not only then but six years later still grubs along in a rented flat without any fixed income, his relatives from Ebes can afford to purchase a flat in Lipótváros and soon get fine employments. The situation did not change significantly even by 1926 for Péter and his friends who had fled after the change of empires. Ignác finds the main reason for this phenomenon in the attitude of Péter Göncze and the members of his revisionist movement as they considered themselves victims and they solely accused

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<sup>24</sup> Hungarian National Defence Association was established in January 1919 with the leadership of Gyula Gömbös. Its aim was the defence of territorial integrity of Hungary. After the Treaty of Trianon due to internal affairs the association and its leader gradually dwindled and from 1928 the seceding of Gyula Gömbös it became absolutely insignificant.

Revisionists League was established in 1927 to support and coordinate irredentist movements. The organisation led by Ferenc Herczeg until its breaking-up in 1944 did national and international propaganda.



Trianon for their existential crises. On the contrary, the middle aged Gerő Bákody and the majority of his contemporaries could integrate in a short period of time owing to their connections and will. Although the contrast exists not only in the generational differences since there are ample examples for young people in their early twenties who were able to make a career in their new environment as well. The main differences should be looked for in their different attitudes. This is what Rózsa Ignác emphasizes in the preface of her book. She wanted to draw the reader's attention to the behaviour which characterized groups and individuals in the society of refugees. She speaks of a type of human nature which tries to get on by using his status as a refugee as well as communities for which the only bonding force was the lamentation over the lost past.

It is worth examining the types of protagonists the authors used to characterize refugee question. Judit Beczássy, who fundamentally considered refugees as victims, mainly gave positive features for her characters. Let us take the old maidservant of the Deésy family into consideration; she was the only one from the household staff after many years of service who followed her employers to Hungary. The fact that she was entrusted with the guarding of the freight-cars for several weeks in a railway station in Budapest shows her reliability and relationship to the family. She is also the one who later stays with the family in spite of their bankruptcy, though by the end of the '20s she had better and more remunerative jobs, too. Her character both represents the taintless behaviour of Transylvanians (a common public opinion) and the topos of the faithful maidservant as well.

Another but far from positive refugee character is Tamás Kuthy, a former friend of Dénes Deésy, who, contrary to the High Sheriff, instantly occupies a position in one of the ministries after his arrival. He appears only a few times in the story but when he does it happens because of some ethically questionable venture in most cases. The character of Kuthy represents the envied and (at least for some people including Ignác Rózsa) antipathetic figure of a refugee who is able to create a new existence within a short period of time only by taking advantage of his status and connections. The only fully negative character amongst the ex-Transylvanians is Péter mentioned always on his surname. His reputation is further worsened by the fact that as a founder of a bank he intemperately exploited those wealthy but

confused refugees who could not or would not want to do anything with their new situation. Utilizing the help of the members of refugees' upper-class such as Dénes Deéry, Pétery had founded a bank in Pest, after a few years he declared bankruptcy and finally left his family and the country and moved abroad with the remaining capital. In order to safeguard his pseudo-activity he nominated honoured personalities as members of board of directors who ment guarantee for the investors. As a member of board of directors, Deéry invested almost all his money in his „own” bank, so the crash affected the family's financials severely. It was common amongst wealthy refugees during those decades to try to secure their money by purchasing properties or to multiply it on the stock exchange. Of course, this attracted land-jobbers, stock-brokers, and private-bankers who tried to take advantage of people who were not familiar with the financial world.

The portrayal of refugees in *Urak, úrfiak* (Gentleman and Young Masters) is less schematic than it is in *Menekültek* (Refugees). The roots of existential crises are primarily to be found in ethical and not in financial defects. It is especially true in the case of the „young masters” who arrived to the capital in the early 1920's and who still tried to take advantage of their status as a refugee to gain positions even at the last third of the decade. Péter Göncze also quotes the motto of their (initially probably not conscious) philosophy, „*Trianon Ruined our Lives*” when he asks his relative, public prosecutor Gerő Bákody, to subsidize his irredentist organisation. Not only he but also those other white collar worker refugees in an insecure situation who symbolically gathered around the irredentist paper *Honfoglalás* (Conquering of Homeland) used the same means and terminology in their effort to put their things straight.

Parallely to the refugees called „go-getters” by Rózsa Ignác, those groups which tried to reorganize and continuously relive their lost communities due to the change of empires also appear in the book. The tens of thousands people settled down in the capital city contributed to the coming to life of memories of the old homeland within the walls of pubs, restaurants, groceries or barber shops opened by refugees. The haunts of young masters and refugees from Ebes were also those places whose owners provided space for the re-creation of home. Péter Göncze and his fellow editors spent a part of their days in a Transylvanian refugee's, Zoltán Czinna's chop-house. We do not

know if Czinna's restaurant really existed but it seems certain that Ignác Rózsa partially used original Transylvanian and Hungarian locations for her novel. One of these is the Kovácsévics restaurant in 29 Rákóczi Street in District 8, a place well-known and respected by refugees and where people from Szepes went on every Thursday for many years.<sup>25</sup> This place appears in the novel as the place where anybody with any social background from Ebes met to commemorate the glorious past. The author demonstrates the everyday lives of associations and clubs devoted to the past and to revisionism with the representation of their communal events. There are members who establish living ethnographic collections at their homes or give Transylvanian names to the objectives of their excursions in Buda. These all were strategies of survival for those driven out from their homelands by necessity. A massive part of refugees could not or did not want to leave behind their mythicized world, which is well-represented by the fact that a significant part of the young people around Honfoglalás (Conquering of Homeland) tried to make a living by irredentist cultural performances or artwork even at the end of the 1920s. This type of character sticks to the sacrosanct and unquestionable past, which was criticized by Rózsa Ignác.

Before we return to the discussion of the financial downfall which fundamentally influenced the life of the Deésy family, it is worth looking back to the years when the family lived the everyday life of the capital city's civic elite. Let us first examine what their acquaintances thought about them. Although not amplified in the novel, we can come to the conclusion by the reactions of a poor relative and other people living in freight-cars that the successful integration of the family evoked jealousy. It is probable that not only the Deésys but all immigrants who managed to adapt quickly and effectively – the 'outlanders', as they were called by the contemporaries – often generated opposition amongst the 'natives', that is, their hosts. The delinquent and sometimes even open animosity between the recipients and those moving in can be considered if not a common but an existing phenomenon. It is confirmed by the report of NORA as

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<sup>25</sup> The life of refugees in Szepes in Budapest see more in: Gergely István Szűts: A szepesi menekültek sajtója 1920 és 1944 között. in: Fórum, Társadalomtudományi Szemle, 2012/1. 23-34. (under publishing)

well, which particularly mentions and opposes these – in the eyes of NORA – dispersedly occurring deeds.<sup>26</sup>

Although the official propaganda of the period scarcely ever mentioned hostile manifestations against refugees, suspicion, condemnation and sometimes animosity could have been prevalent in social reactions especially at the beginning of the 1920s.<sup>27</sup> We say this in spite of the fact that the novels contain only a few references to such events of conflicts. The reason for this is that the characters could avoid most of the sources of conflicts (such as searching for employment and lodgement) owing to their social status. Naturally it is only partially true; the creation of an existence must have been accompanied by grave sacrifices and compromises for those arriving to the capital city at a young age – as Péter Göncze did – and without considerable connections.

The story of the families ends at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s. After their seemingly fast and successful integration, the Deésys got into severe financial conditions due to their aforementioned abortive investment by the end of the decade. In spite of the inevitable bankruptcy, they did everything to maintain the guise of their former life in accordance with their social rank for months, even at the expense of the exhaustion of their reserves. It is a typical example of the declassing of middle class. The fall seemed inevitable; but instead of total breakdown, the family's morality (that is immanent throughout the story) helped them to bear the loss of their status. Their former benefactor Mr Steiner shared with them the potential life strategies of an impoverishing citizen and advised them to put up lodgers or boarders, to dismiss the servants and to rent a tobacco-shop as a modest but stable source of income. The Deésyés did not undertake these possibilities because of their child and moved from the villa in Buda to a two bedroom (with, bathroom, kitchen and servants' hall) fourth-floor flat of a block of flats instead. This happened at the end of the 1920s on the eve of the Great Depression.

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<sup>26</sup> Petrichevich- Horváth 1924.1.

<sup>27</sup> In one of my former studies I examined conflicts due to housing shortages in a city north of Hungary. During my research it became apparent that clashes occurred not only between immigrants and locals but amongst only the immigrants, too. Housing shortages further divided the local community already in a deep crisis and along their different values, beliefs or purely due to material interests. Szűts 2010.

The author tried to place her characters into a different social class by moving them from their villa on Rózsadomb to the world of employees and to give an insight to the everyday lives of those living on the fading boundaries between middle and lower middle class. The fate the Deésys could avoid in 1920 finally befell them. The head of the family formerly honoured as a national hero and his wife had to live in circumstances that were unimaginable before; sharing a sofa-bed in the parlour of their flat and converting the dining room and kitchen to the children's bedroom and servant's hall for the night. As a sounding example of the period's exigency they also had to take in a lodger, which represents not only their come-down but that of the lower middle class' as well. Events end here in the simple tenement house in Buda on the eve of the Great Depression. The Deésy family could integrate only partially even a decade after losing their home, still by rather bearing than accepting their loss, and it is mainly due to the fact that the members of the family were young at the time of their emigration.

Families fleeing from South-Transylvania followed a different path from that of the former High Sheriff and his family's. Gerő Bákody had previously ensured financial safety for himself and his son long before their arrival to Budapest. His career remained untouched in spite of - or maybe because - he was the public prosecutor in the infamous French franc fraud trial.<sup>28</sup> In reality, Jenő Makkai after whom Bákody was modeled, stood for the French state in the lawsuit.

In spite of their financial safety, the son of Gerő Bákody as a member of Trianon generation was not able to find a profession easily. But he was not the only one; those young people in their early twenties living under the shock of Trianon had to face the same difficulties. These refugees still lived in the past their problems can change only by the end of the story. While some of them (typically the minor characters) still vegetate or commit suicide, Péter Göncze, owing to his connections and his marriage, gets as high as the position of under-secretary of State and becomes well-known. Not only him but the majority of young people gathering around Honfoglalás (Conquering of Homeland) get into important positions by the end

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<sup>28</sup> See more on the infamous trial on falsification of French franc in: Balázs Ablonczy: Összeesküvés a frank ellen. In: Rubicon 2005/9.

of the 1930s thanks to their toughness (which is disapproved by the author) and their public work.

Besides their personal successes, the opening of the borders as a consequence of Second Vienna Award brought significant changes in their communal life lived in their Transylvanian style homes and in the corners of their restaurants.<sup>29</sup> Almost all of the former travelled back home as soon as they could after the reannexation of North-Transylvania but after a short stay the majority of them returned to their homes in Budapest. Péter Göncze as under-secretary of State was present at the ceremonial recapture of Kolozsvár (Cluj) with an official delegation, while Gábor Bákody became disappointed in Hungarian public life and therefore was moving from Paris to London at that time. Only the Armenian couple, the Gabradiáns, settled back to Transylvania. From the refugees from Ebes, apparently not accidentally. As Erzsébetváros (Ebes) and Kisasszonyfalva (where the former estate of the Göncze family was located) remained on the other side of the border, the Gabradiáns applied for a job in Szamosújvár, centre of Transylvanian-Armenians. Events and the social-political phenomena following the return of North-Transylvania represent well what Rózsa Ignác demonstrated against. The attitude of a certain group of refugees portrayed by the author becomes perceptible in 1940 when the possibility of repatriation was given to them. The idea of moving back to Transylvania was not seriously considered by the onetime refugees who became involved in revisionist movements. Most of them - after a long but in some cases ethically questionable struggle - finally succeeded in creating a new existence which they were not ready to give up even for the recaptured homeland or for Greater Hungary. This was the point when those refugees who lived under the spell of revisionism, exploited their status as a refugee and finally for whom the reconnected territories bore only a symbolic significance, became discredited for Ignác.

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<sup>29</sup> Following the first Vienna Award on 2nd November 1938, - which gave back to Hungary the areas of the Uplands (*now south-Slovakia-trans*) inhabited by a Hungarian majority-, on 30th August 1940 north-Transylvania also returned. The almost 2.5 million people living on the reconnected territory were ethnically inhomogeneous as due to the census carried out in 1941 only a littlebit more than the half of the population avowed itself Hungarian.

## Conclusions

The portrayal of the characters of the stories describing almost two decades of the lives of the refugees drew attention to the unrightful and in many cases irrational consequences of Trianon Peace Treaty. The authors wanted to draw attention to the social crises of interwar Hungary with the life stories of refugee families. The approach and exposition of the question is different in the two novels, but both novels can be used as source material for the refugee question of Trianon, which is a still unexplored issue today. The authors chose as the theme of their novels a contemporary phenomenon that directly or indirectly affected the lives of almost all Hungarian families. Beyond personal relations, the presence of almost half a million refugees in Hungary and their lack on the other side of the border had a fundamental impact on the lives of Hungarian communities both in Hungary and in the successor states in the Charpatian Basin.

Judit Beczássy saw her protagonists as victims of the Treaty of Trianon and exonerated them from every blame and responsibility. The ethical tragedy of the Deésy family inevitably gave an easily acceptable explanation for the refugee question, although the novel could not have significant attention. Rózsa Ignácz considered the question to be more complex and difficult. Instead of explaining the decisions of her characters always on the basis of their existence as a refugee she puts the emphasis on individual responsibility. Thus the novel became the critique of refugees and the Hungarian upper middle-class and irredentist cult at the same time. This is symbolized very well by her original choice of title and its later revision.

The portrayal of the characters' can be criticized especially in the case of Judit Beczássy, but it is also certain that both authors drew attention to a less discussed question of an era which, as we saw, is not only about leaving your homeland by necessity but about being an alien or the possibilities and impossibilities of integration as well.

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