

Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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PRIME MINISTERS OFFICE
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COMMUNITIES ABROAD

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Árpád János Potápi: We would like to see that Romania observes its own laws and those of the EU

On Tuesday, State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad at the Prime Minister's Office Árpád János Potápi and the president of the Council for Human Dignity Dr. Zoltán Lomnici held a joint press conference on the restitution of Hungarian church properties in Romania confiscated under communism. Speaking at the press conference, the state secretary said that "We would only like to see that Romania observes its own laws and those of the European Union". Mr. Potápi stressed that the Hungarian government is making efforts to help churches, civil society organizations and private individuals beyond the borders with forwarding their submissions to European forums as well as with enabling them to appear before the competent forums. Additionally, the Hungarian government is also seeking to mobilize the support of Hungarian Members of the European Parliament and to speak up in their interest at every possible forum. He added that "At the same time, it is not we who should give assistance, but the successor states which should observe the laws they created themselves, as well as international conventions". Speaking at the press conference, Zoltán Lomnici said that the return of unlawfully confiscated church properties – including Hungarian church properties – was a condition of Romania's accession to the EU. However, Romania has only assessed one half of the reclamation requests, and just over one third of the reclaimed properties have been returned to church ownership. He added that this problem is all the more serious because churches played a crucial role in the survival of Hungarian communities in Transylvania before World War II, but even under the communist dictatorship and after the fall of communism.

Gergely Gulyás: The Memorial Day of Hungarians Deported from Czechoslovakia is about the past and the future

Speaking at a state commemoration held in Parliament on the Memorial Day of Hungarians Deported from Czechoslovakia after the Second World War, the Deputy Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly Gergely Gulyás said that the memorial day is not only about paying tribute to Hungarians expelled from their homeland, but also about the present. At the event, which was organized by the Rákóczi Association, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament said that on this memorial day every Hungarian who cares for the fate of their nation has three tasks. First of all, to give thanks to God that after all its vicissitudes there is still a Hungarian community in Slovakia. Secondly, to pay tribute to those who were executed and deported from their homeland. And thirdly, to remember that this day is also about the present, since as long as there is a state in Europe in which the Beneš decrees – which contravene international law, being based on collective guilt – are in force, this day continues to be a day of the "present" as well.

On 3 December 2012 the Hungarian National Assembly unanimously declared 12 April as the Memorial Day of Hungarians Deported from Czechoslovakia. The Hungarian National Assembly also stated in a resolution that on this day there should



be a fitting remembrance for Hungarians who were expelled from Czechoslovakia and deported to Hungary as a result of the Beneš decrees.

Criticism from the USA concerning the situation of Hungarians in Romania

The 2015 annual report of the United States State Department on the issue of human rights criticizes Romania for its measures against Hungarians living in Romania. It mentions, for example, Romanian authorities' attitude towards the use of Szekler symbols. The report was made public on Wednesday afternoon. It highlights the fact that corruption – especially corruption among officials – constitutes a serious problem in Romania. The report also declares that the confiscation of properties obtained illegally is still slow and is hindered by a number of obstacles. Concerning Hungarian communities, the report – in which several documents compiled by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) were used – states that the use of the Hungarian language continues to be limited, both in courts and in public administration; several municipalities also still refuse to install bilingual signs. The report states that Romanian courts obstruct the municipal financing of Hungarian-language newspapers, and the Romanian government continues to prevent the establishment of a Hungarian-language university. In addition, the US State Department also finds there to be a low number of Hungarian-language cultural institutions in Romania.

Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén and Hunor Kelemen receive award from the Romanian Evangelical-Lutheran Church

On Thursday, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Hungarian communities abroad and president of the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) Zsolt Semjén and the president of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) Hunor Kelemen received the Reményik Sándor Award from the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Romania. The awards were presented during the church's ceremonial theological session. The two-day session of the church's synod was dedicated to the topic of reformation, and the commemoration of Transylvanian Lutheran pastors and theology students who were persecuted and sentenced because of their solidarity with the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. At the event, church historian László Csendes gave a presentation on the 11 Transylvanian Lutheran pastors and theology students who were sentenced because they stood up for the 1956 Revolution.

The Slovak government's program statement is approved

During its session on Wednesday, the Government of Slovakia approved its program statement, which is based on the Cabinet's program priorities for the period between



2010 and 2016. A paragraph of the program statement's fourth chapter, entitled "The policy on the support of national minorities" is dedicated to national minorities. It states that the Slovak government considers the protection and support of national minorities to be its "self-evident mission." In its program statement the Government pledges that elementary schools in territories inhabited by both Hungarians and Slovaks will be exempted from nationally obligatory rules; in addition, the Government will increase support for minority schools, amend the methodology for education in the Slovakian language, support vocational training in the mother tongue and increase funding for minority schools, teachers and the purchase of suitable textbooks for these schools. In addition, the Government pledges to support extended travel to school for those pupils and students who have no opportunity to study in their mother tongue in their town or village. The Government will also support those colleges and universities which serve the development of national minorities in certain fields. In addition, the program statement of the Slovak government also declares that in the next government term a state fund will be established to support the culture of national minorities.



Viktor Orbán: Vojvodina Economic Development Program marks the beginning of a new era

After meeting the leaders of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) in Szabadka/Subotica, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said that this is the beginning of a new era, as Hungary has been able to launch the HUF 50-billion (EUR 160 million) Vojvodina Economic Development Program. At a press conference held after the meeting, the Prime Minister said that this program is equally beneficial for the Serbs, the Hungarians living there, Hungary and the EU. Mr. Orbán welcomed the fact that the program was developed by the VMSZ, and the Government only needed to offer its support. He added that this is better than trying to imagine in Budapest what would be in the best interests of those living in some other part of the Carpathian Basin. Mr. Orbán pointed out that with this initiative the path to be followed in the future has also been shown to other Hungarian communities, and the initial results are promising. The Prime Minister also said that he arrived in Szabadka in the midst of an election campaign, and while the leader of a neighboring country must not interfere in an electoral contest, he may encourage people to vote. At the same time there is a Hungarian party there, and therefore he called upon the Hungarians living there to vote and to support the VMSZ, which is a fixed point of reference and the guarantee of a secure future in Vojvodina. The Prime Minister said that his government thinks in terms of the entire nation, and its responsibility also extends beyond that which it owes to people living in the territory of Hungary. Mr. Orbán expressed the hope that thousands of contracts will be signed as part of the economic development program. He stressed that this will make it clear that, while thinking in a national context, Hungary is strong enough to also help Hungarians beyond its



borders and create opportunities for them. He said that the economic development program sees the dawn of a new era, in which Hungarians in Vojvodina can prove that they have talent and energy, that restrictions are less of a burden on their lives, and that they can show their desire to work hard and their vitality.



Hungarian government allocates HUF 2 billion to strengthen Transcarpathia's economy

According to a government decision published on Tuesday in the Hungarian Journal, Official Gazette (Magyar Közlöny), the Hungarian government has allocated HUF 2 billion (EUR 6.4 million) in grant money this year to achieve economic development aims in Ukraine's Transcarpathia, while grant money for the years 2017 and 2018 will be allocated at a later date. According to the government decision, Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade together with the Cultural Association of Hungarians in Transcarpathia (KMKSZ) will be responsible for the coordination of the strategy's implementation. The government decision also states that operating expenditures related to achieving the goals is limited to HUF 150 million (EUR 480,000) this year and HUF 200 million (EUR 640,000) in both 2017 and 2018. At the same time, the resolution states that the Government is supporting the raising of capital at Magyar Eximbank to ensure a HUF 20 billion (EUR 64 million) preferential credit line to businesses in the region.

