

Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi receives the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Astrid Thors in his office

On Wednesday, State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Árpád János Potápi received the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Astrid Thors in his office. During the talks, the State Secretary said that during the High Commissioner's last visit, in 2012, problems relating to the situation of Hungarians living abroad were outlined, and the majority of these are still present. While relations with Slovakia and Serbia have improved, the situation of the Hungarian community in Romania has deteriorated significantly. As examples, Mr. Potápi mentioned abuses in the field of language rights, the use of national symbols, the restitution of church and community properties, and lawsuits launched against Transylvanian Hungarian politicians and leaders of municipalities. Regarding the situation of the Hungarian national minority in Ukraine, the state secretary said that it is extremely difficult due to the prolonged political crisis in the country. Ms. Thors ensured the representatives of the Hungarian government that she would continue to follow the situation of national minorities living in the region, and expressed the hope that their situation will soon improve.



God wants us to live a better life in our homeland

On Sunday, Csíksomlyó/Șumuleu Ciuc in Szeklerland was crowded with hundreds of thousands of pilgrims attending the traditional annual Csíksomlyó Pentecost Pilgrimage. According to traditional customs, the groups processing under the cross hold placards indicating where they have come from. In addition to religious flags, there were also countless Hungarian and Szekler flags. The speaker at the Holy Mass was honorary canon and honorary archdeacon, the parish priest of Csíkdélné László Csintalan, who stressed in his sermon that we must "fill the living space" our homeland gives us. The archdeacon said that "God wants us to live, and to live a better life in our homeland." He emphasized that we should draw strength from the Csíksomlyó Pentecost Pilgrimage to be able – together with our family, church community and nation – to ask for God's blessings to help us fill our living space. He stressed that "we must fill our living space in order to prevent our schools from losing their children, our villages, towns and country from losing their people." The event was also attended by President of Hungary János Áder and his wife Anita Herczegh, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Hungarian Communities Abroad Zsolt Semjén and Deputy Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly Sándor Lezsák.

Pilgrims have been gathering together at Csíksomlyó at Pentecost for 449 years, to honor the Szeklers of Csík who defeated the troops of John Sigismund during the battle of Tolvajos tető. The king tried to force the Szeklers to convert to Protestantism.



Bishop Áron Márton's statue unveiled in Csíkszereda in the presence of President János Áder

On Sunday, the statue of Transylvanian Hungarian bishop Áron Márton (1896-1980) was inaugurated in the main square of Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc in Szeklerland, in the presence of the President of Hungary János Áder. In his address, the President praised the bishop for his brave stance against all oppressive powers, including his protest against the deportation of Jews from Northern Transylvania, then a part of Hungary, during the Second World War. Quoting the bishop, the President said that "working for the nation is not a separate profession, but a duty inseparable from any profession." Mr. Áder added that Áron Márton led his congregation, church, community and nation like a general, and served them like a servant.

Áron Márton was a Hungarian bishop of the Transylvanian Catholic Church, a committed protector of human rights and Christianity, who stood up against the dictatorships of the 20th century. To mark the 120th anniversary of his birth, the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad named 2016 the Memorial Year of Bishop Márton Áron, and several events and programs are being organized throughout the year. As part of this memorial year, on Friday an outdoor exhibition entitled "In the service of the community" was opened in Csíkszereda, presenting the exemplary life and activity of the bishop. Addressing the event, Deputy State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Péter Szilágyi said that Áron Márton's stance for people living in minority and those oppressed in their religion shows us that we should treat our fellow human beings with love and understanding.

The Szekler National Council loses lawsuit in the European Court of Justice

According to the decision of the European Court of Justice made public on Tuesday, the European Commission acted lawfully in rejecting registration of the citizens' initiative launched by the Szekler National Council (SZNT). In its decision, the court states that proposals to launch European citizens' initiatives which are aimed to foster the development of geographical territories (regions) inhabited by national minorities cannot be registered. The court added that the concept of region should be determined with respect to the political, administrative and institutional situation in the Member State concerned. The decision also underlined that the survival of special ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic features of these regions is not an aim which could justify the adoption of a legal action under the EU's cohesion policy. The decision adds that the EU's cohesion policy focuses on the enhancement of the harmonious development of the entire European Union, and the reduction of serious and constant demographic disadvantages affecting some regions.





Consultations at the Slovak Ministry of Interior on the MKP's petition bring no results

On Tuesday, the president of the petition committee of the Party of the Hungarian Community (MKP) Péter Óry informed the Hungarian news agency MTI that consultations held in Slovakia's Ministry of Interior on the MKP's petition were not constructive and had brought no results. The MKP's petition had two aims: firstly, to reject the EU's quota system on the redistribution of migrants; and secondly, to make local referenda compulsory. Such referenda would primarily deal with measures related to the migration crisis, the modification of environmental conditions and the issue of Hungarian town names. The petition was launched in October 2015 and was signed by more than eighty thousand people. This has been the petition of the Hungarian community in Slovakia which has received the greatest attention since the fall of communism.



Agreement in principle between the SNS and the VMSZ on cooperation in Vojvodina

The Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) have concluded an agreement in principle on cooperation in Vojvodina. The representatives of the two parties laid down the main principles of cooperation in the Parliament of Vojvodina, the provincial government, and in those municipalities in which these two parties won the highest number of seats. According to the press office of the SNS, the parties agreed upon the most important priority programs at provincial and local governmental levels, as well as issues dealing with the distribution of power at these levels.



The Hungarian Government allocates HUF 5.2 billion for economic development in Transcarpathia

Government commissioner at the Prime Minister's Office Dr. István Grezsa told the Hungarian news agency MTI that the first tenders of the Transcarpathian economic development program will be made public in summer, and will focus on the development of tourism, agriculture and the strengthening of small and medium-sized enterprises in Transcarpathia. The government commissioner added that the first winners are expected to receive their money in September. Mr. Grezsa said that in addition to the HUF 2 billion (EUR 6.3 million) non-refundable financial aid, Hungary is allocating a further HUF 20 billion (EUR 63 million) in loans through the Eximbank. He added that in 2017 the Hungarian Government will allocate a further HUF 5.2 billion (EUR 16 million). The economic development program is based on the Egán Ede plan and is expected to be finished in 2018. The final sum of the aid will be HUF 12 + 20 billion (EUR 38 million + 63 million). The government commissioner



added that in addition to Transcarpathian political organizations, the historical churches of the region are also strategic partners of the Government, therefore, their representatives will also take part in the evaluation procedure of the competition. Mr. Grezsa also spoke about the Hungarian-language courses which were launched some weeks ago for Ukrainians living in Transcarpathia. He expressed his pleasure that as a result of the courses, 1,000 Ukrainian students have started to study Hungarian as a foreign language in this academic year.

