



Continuing Assimilation

The Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldova (ACSHM) launched an education program ten years ago. It allowed the Csángó children in 25 settlements, throughout Moldova, to learn their folk culture in their mother tongue. This was a large undertaking and quite successful. However, one program executive noted that one key objective could not be accomplished: ending the assimilation of the Hungarian-speaking Csángós.

The Csángós, a 250,000-member-community, reside east of the Carpathians, in Romanian Moldova. For a long time, they called themselves Catholics. This is how they differentiated themselves from the local Orthodox Romanians, who lived in the same region. It is estimated that 60,000 Moldova Csángós speak Hungarian, with a smattering of many archaic Hungarian expressions and borrowed Romanian words.

At the turn of the century, the Csángó settlements began formal education. But this was practiced in the Romanian language. In Moldova, with the exception of a few years in the 1950s, there was no education in the Hungarian language, until 2000.

Under these circumstances, to a large extent, the assimilation of the Csángós was nearly complete. Founded in 1990, the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldova intervened at the last moment, by launching the Csángós' Education Program in 2000. It started in two settlements, involving 70 children. It consisted of extracurricular Hungarian educational activities, on a part-time basis. Following a documentary, produced by Duna TV, the ACSHM program was publicized and became the target of criticism. Several parties attacked the education program.

Agents of the Roman Catholic Church exerted the most pressure (and still do). Often, Romanian-speaking Roman Catholic priests threaten the parents of children being taught Hungarian. This is accomplished by surreptitious reports and blackmail; a recurring phenomena.

Despite these obstacles, the ACSHM was able to provide the Hungarian education program to 25 Moldova settlements over 10 years, reaching 1,600 children. Currently, 1,600 children learn Hungarian, along with its literature. The more fortunate are taught within their own schools. This may sound like a success story. However, according to Éva Ferencz, education program coordinator, "It is estimated that there are 9,000 children speaking Hungarian in Moldova and we only reached 1,600..."

According to Attila Hegyeli, teaching the children is not enough. ACSHM should launch a program for adults too. Furthermore, concrete economic, social, and cultural measures should be implemented, so this ethnic Hungarian community can survive. For the Csángó mission project to be genuinely successful, it must reach at least 30-35 additional villages. Besides providing the Hungarian education program, they also start a "Children's Home" that hosts every Hungarian cultural extracurricular activity.

In addition, ACSHM encourages the Roman Catholic Church to send a Hungarian priest to every Hungarian village, on Csángó Land. It is a well-known fact that these communities are influenced by the language in which they confess their faith. If it is in Hungarian, they are more likely to adhere to the Hungarian language and customs.

Campaign against Hungarian Street Names

Romanian civil organizations successfully protested against the Hungarian street names in Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy), an east Transylvanian city with a majority Hungarian population. Their civilian petition and dissent was welcome by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). In October 2010, the MHA sent a group of experts to investigate potential infringement, regarding the local government resolution, in the case of the Hungarian street names.

Previously, the Romanian Civic Forum in Harghita and Covasna County launched a campaign against the local Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy) government and their decision to give Hungarian names to certain streets in the city.

The Bucharest supervisors' recommendation (transcript) was sent to the Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy) prefecture. They suggested that the prefect should appeal the local resolution on the Hungarian street names, in the administrative court.

The Bucharest investigators raised three objections. First, the local council did not budget for the expenses, regarding changing the original street signs. Second, the local council did not comply with the time limit of the public debate. Third, the court already condemned a local council decision to name a street after Hungarian poet Sándor Petőfi.



Bilingual street sign of Hungarian connotation at Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe); spray painted.

Ethnic Hungarian Mayor, Árpád Antal believes the objections are unfounded. Nonetheless, he declared that none of the three objections were valid.

First, the mayor stated that the replacement of the street signs would not incur extra costs, for the city or its citizens, since “the money would go from one pocket into the other.” Thus, there was no need for any resolution. Second, the Mayor stated that the Hungarian street sign public debate was held within the proper time period. Third, the Mayor stated that any reference to the prior approvals of street signs were not applicable in this case. He contends that the new resolution deviates from the prior approvals, within several new paragraphs.

“Now, it is Prefect Ervin György’s turn. It is up to him whether he appeals against our resolution. Even if the court nullifies it, we will pass it over and over again, until the streets bear the names the local council has in mind. It is my firm conviction that we proceeded legally. In the spirit of local autonomy, the local government has the authority to name the streets of the settlement, and they can not influence us from Bucharest,” the mayor summarized.

Prefect Ervin György declared: “It seems I will not attack the resolution and I already reported this to the ministry too.”

Half of the Hungarian Students Need to Study in Romanian Universities

Hungarian students in Romania will continue their higher education in Hungarian and Romanian universities in an equal 50/50 ratio, in a survey mandated by the Cluj (Kolozsvár) Academic Committee. This reveals severe deficiencies and limitations of the Hungarian speaking higher education in Romania.

The Academic Committee commissioned the student survey, based on the recommendation of Z. Attila Papp, a sociologist from Gheorgheni (Gyergyószentmiklós). The actual survey was conducted by Omnibus Ltd., located in Gheorgheni, under the supervision of János Márton.

While not yet published, the study was funded by the Motherland Fund of Hungary (Szülőföld Alap). It will provide indispensable facts that are critical to forming a higher education strategy, for Hungarian high school graduates.

The student survey is the first step to compile a data system that is designed for Hungarian students in Romania to choose a career. It fills an information gap.

János Márton emphasized that the questions were first and foremost selected to inform teachers about their current students. By collecting the accumulated experiences of students, a final picture was derived.

However, the data set is incomplete: 20% of the 2009 graduates did not respond. The goal was to obtain 8,218 student responses, but only 6,452 were actually collected. The survey was designed to collect data from 367 classrooms at 130 schools in 62 settlements.

The final report will include the actual margin of error. Early findings:

94.8% of full-time Hungarian students graduate from high school. Naturally, the graduation rates are lower for part-time or night-school students. The survey tabulation indicates that 51.3% of high school graduates will attend college/university.

Of 3,964 higher education students, 95% of Hungarians continue their studies in Romania.

The most popular college cities, in rank order, include: Cluj (Kolozsvár), Targu Mures (Marosvásárhely), and Oradea (Nagyvárad).

The actual breakdown by university is as follows:

1.	42.11 %	Babes-Bolyai University	Cluj (Kolozsvár)
2.	9.59 %	University of Medicine and Pharmacy	Targu Mures (Marosvásárhely)
3.	7.73 %	Sapientia-EMTE	Oradea (Nagyvárad)

The Hungarian minority in Transylvania still claims the following with respect to education in their mother tongue in the higher education:

- a) Approval of the Hungarian faculties of Natural Sciences, Humanities, as well as Social and Economical Sciences at the 'Babes-Bolyai' University and the subsequent restoration of the Hungarian language 'Bolyai' University;
- b) The Romanian government should financially support the Sapientia-EMTE University;
- c) The creation of state-financed, Hungarian language higher education for engineers, agriculture, and fine arts.

Năstase would deport all Gypsies to the Szekler Land

Ilie Năstase, the former Romanian tennis star, stated in a Romanian sporting journal that if he were head of state, he would relocate all Gypsies to Harghita County in order to change the ethnic composition of the region.

The tennis stars' complete declarations reminded the *Pro Sport* journalist of Stalin and Hitler. He noted that in the 1940s and 1950s, Stalin deported more than 1 million Romanians from Bessarabia to Siberia. Then, re-settled another million Russians and Ukrainians to Bessarabia; thus, manipulating the ethnic composition of the region.



Romanian tennis star, Ilie Năstase once and now.

Ilie Năstase's views, considered extremist by the *Pro Sport* journalist, include:

“Sarkozy protected the French citizens, so should the Romanian head of state too. (...) The Romanian Gypsy question should be handled by us, Romanians, not the French, or the Austrian. If I were the Romanian state president I would send the Gypsies to Harghita County, since many Hungarians live there and there are approximately only 12 Romanians. I would create favorable life conditions for them. Therefore, the ethnic proportions of the region would be changed too. Ceausescu was wrong! He should have done what the Russians did in Bessarabia. I would like the Romanians in Hungary to have the same rights as the Romanian Hungarians enjoy.”

These comments prompted The National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) to commence an official investigation into Năstase's declarations.

Previous Transylvanian Monitor issues are available at: www.emnt.org

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