

CRUEL ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

The Roman Catholic Bishopric of Iasi has been rejecting for many years the demand of the Hungarian-speaking Csángó believers to have Hungarian-speaking church services. This kind of discrimination was recently also condemned by the National Anti-Discrimination Council (CNCD) – reported Transylvanian daily paper Krónika.

This decision was based on the July 2005 complaint of the Saint Stephen Union of Pusztina/Pustina. The direct reason of their submission was that the Roman Catholic chaplain of Pusztina outraged a dead Csángó woman at her funeral because due to her last wish her family held the vigil at her coffin in the Hungarian language.

CNCD stated that the Roman Catholic Bishopric of Iasi is discriminating the Hungarian speaking Csángós when refusing their wish for holy masses in their mother tongue. The Council reasoned that each Roman Catholic diocese is using various languages during the rites.

The National Anti-Discrimination Council (CNCD), established to curb discrimination of any kind, including on religious and ethnic grounds.

“The Csángós are a non-homogeneous group of Roman Catholic people of Hungarian origin. This ethnic group is a relic from the Middle Ages that has survived in Moldavia, in the eastern part of the Romanian Carpathians. Csángós are associated with distinct linguistic peculiarities, ancient traditions, and a great diversity of folk art and culture. For centuries, the self-identity of the Csángós was based on the Roman Catholic religion and their own language, a Hungarian dialect, spoken in the family and the village community.



Csángó children in their traditional wear

Today only 60,000 - 70,000 persons speak the Csángó language. To try to preserve this example of Europe's cultural diversity the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers encourage Romania to support the Csángós through concrete measures in particular in the field of education.

I. Draft recommendation

1. Further to its report on the endangered Uralic minority cultures in Russia and the adoption of Resolution 1171 (1998) the Assembly is concerned about the situation of the Csángó minority culture, which has existed in Romania for centuries.

2. The Csángós are a non-homogeneous group of Roman Catholic people. This ethnic group is a relic from the Middle Ages that has survived in Moldavia, in the eastern part of the Romanian Carpathians. Csángós speak an early form of Hungarian and are associated with ancient traditions, and a great diversity of folk art and culture, which is of exceptional value for Europe.

3. For centuries, the self-identity of the Csángós was based on the Roman Catholic religion and their own language spoken in the family and the village community. This, as well as their archaic life-style and world-view, may explain their very strong ties to the Catholic religion and the survival of their dialect.

4. Those who still speak Csángó or consider it their mother tongue have been declining as a proportion of the population. Although not everybody agrees on this number it is thought that between 60,000 and 70,000 persons speak the Csángó language.

5. Today in Moldavia, the language of the school and the church is Romanian. There is local teaching in Ukrainian and the study of Polish, Roma and Russian as mother tongues. Despite the provisions of the Romanian law on education and the repeated requests from parents there is no teaching of Csángó language in the Csángó villages. As a consequence, very few Csángós know how to write their mother tongue.

6. The Csángós make no political demands, but merely want to be recognised as a distinct culture. They ask for assistance in safeguarding it and, first and foremost they demand that their children be taught the Csángó language and their church services be held in their mother tongue. (...)

*(Council of Europe Report;
Rapporteur: Mrs Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa, Finland)*

JOINT STATEMENT

regarding the Draft Law on Minorities of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania

With respect to the draft law entitled **Law on the Judiciary Situation of National Minorities in Romania**, launched by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania and submitted to the Romanian Government and Parliament,

defending the interests of the native Hungarian population of Romania;

seeking the democratic settlement of minority issues in Romania, as well as, the Romanian-Hungarian relations;

referring to human and minority rights;

we are issuing a **statement** and sending it to:

- the Government and Parliament of Romania;
- the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania;
- the Hungarian-speaking historic churches and civil organizations in Romania;
- the minority communities' representatives in Romania;
- the Government and Parliament of Hungary;
- the applicable European forums;
- the European Union (EU) and member States.

1. The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) – which is monopolizing the political representation of the almost two million strong Hungarian national community of Transylvania, Romania – being strongly supported by the Romanian political power is forcing its draft law on minorities to the various minority groups in Romania including the Hungarian community itself.
2. The draft law submitted by the Romanian Government to the Parliament has been produced by completely excluding political pluralism, by neglecting public opinion and social will, without consulting the Hungarian community and/or other ethnic groups. DAHR has been re-

jecting the demand for consultation of the Hungarian historic churches and the civil organizations. Therefore, the draft law is missing the social support of minority groups of Romania: it suffers from a serious democracy deficit.

3. To provide the draft law with a pretense of legitimacy, DAHR has appealed for support to the Romanian Government, which is also interested in the parliamentary adoption of a law on the minimum of minority rights, both for upholding its discriminatory minority policy and posturing itself before Romania's European integration.
4. Misleading the Hungarian public opinion and also the European political forums, DAHR and its coalition allies might like to let them believe that the draft law meets the requirements of the European Union (EU) and it grants and guarantees full rights, equality of chances and cultural autonomy to Romania's Hungarians and other ethnic groups. The image-creating propaganda and window-dressing policy of DAHR and the Romania government proved to be successful in deceiving many: the last country report applauded Romania's "results on the field of minority integration" and stated that "the situation of observing minority rights improved". However, these conclusions are incorrect and in fact are false.
5. DAHR propaganda speaks about a possible "breakthrough" and a "result without precedent" should the parliament adopt the draft law. The majority legislation, on the other hand, would like to present this law on minority minimums, as if it included maximal allowances, – to "pay off with the less possible price" the minorities of Romania, including the large Hungarian community. The situation of the defenseless Transylvanian Hungarians becomes more difficult – due to the fact that the actual Hungarian government, which does not undertake the representation of real interests of Hungarians beyond the borders of Hungary –also settles for the minority minimum advocated by DAHR.

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6. Though the draft law is aimed at cultural autonomy, and it includes some items of minority protection, – as a whole, it is unacceptable for the Hungarian national community of Romania. Besides others, it is obvious that the draft law (1) does not dissolve ethnic discrimination; (2) is contrary in several points with the principles of democracy and constitutionality; (3) conflicts with political pluralism, since it provides a monopoly to parliamentary minority representations, including DAHR; (4) severely restricts the right to election and (5) limits the equality of the law, as applied to, members of minority groups; (6) remains in conflict with its promise: the real autonomy of national minorities.
7. However, for the survival of the Transylvanian Hungarian community, personal autonomy is indispensable and also the territorial autonomy of the Szekler-land area. The relevant draft laws were submitted to the parliament, but the nationalistic Romanian political majority would like, with the contribution of DAHR, to replace our drafts with the false alternatives of the Law on the Judiciary Situation of National Minorities in Romania.
8. Keeping in mind the political volition of the Hungarian national community in Romania, and referring to the April 2005 decision of the European Parliament which specified the terms of “subsidiarity” and “self-governance” for the protection the Hungarian minority in Romania, as well as, observing the integration obligation of fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria, on behalf of the following organisations:

the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania (HNCT),

the Szekler National Council (SNC),

the Hungarian Civic Alliance (HCA),

the Hungarian Youth Council (HYC),

the Transylvanian Hungarian Youth (THY),

– *we request that,*

- DAHR **withdraws** its draft law on minorities.
- A social dialogue is started on the draft law including the civil organizations and historic churches.
- Due to its presence in the Romanian Parliament, DAHR should support the autonomy statutes of HNCT and SNC. We ask DAHR to consult our experts when establishing the DAHR parliamentary working papers for the defense of the aforementioned autonomy statutes during the debates. Transylvanian Hungarians need autonomy statues warranting actual and full equality, rather than a draft law on minorities!
- The Romanian Government should examine the monopoly of DAHR, and it should accept as partners, other representations of the Hungarian community.
- The Hungarian Government and Parliament should support the efforts of the Transylvanian Hungarian community seeking real autonomy.
- During the integration process, the competent bodies of the European Union (EU) should consider the real situation and the demands of the Hungarian national community of Romania, and they should acknowledge the parliamentary adoption of Personal Autonomy and the Autonomy of the Szekler-land area, as a condition of survival for Transylvania’s Hungarians.

3 November 2005

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President of SNC

Jenő Szász
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AUTONOMY CONFERENCE

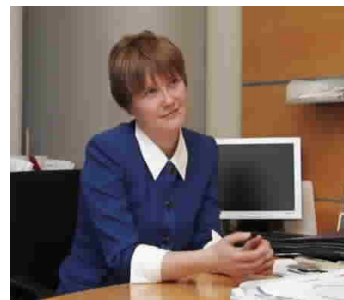
IN BUCHAREST

On November 7-8 an international conference was held in Bucharest with the title "Subsidiarity and Self Governance within the EU-Minority inhabited regions in the enlarged Europe". The organizers were the Robert Schuman Institute in collaboration with the Centre International de Formation Européenne (CIFE) and Kinga Gál, member of the European Parliament.

The lecturers and participants of the conference represented the various EU member states, the Romanian government, as well as the EU Presidency, the Council of Europe's Venice Commission and the Romanian civil society.

The issues debated during this two-day conference referred to questions of decentralization, devolution of power in a general sense, as well as to the principles of subsidiarity and self-governance in those states, where large numbers of autochthonous minority communities are living. When analysing the governance models presented participants from Finland (Åland Island), Spain (Catalonia), Italy (South Tyrol), the UK (Scotland and Wales), these principles appear to have a positive influence on finding viable solutions to conflicts through offering a possible means for the political participation of minorities. The governance model that is based on concepts of sharing, accountability, access to participation, equal opportunities proved to be of the benefit of the state and society in several cases in Europe.

The various models in Europe show that these principles based on effective participation offer viable solutions for these minority communities to the same extent, should it be a territorial solution, on an ethnic or non-ethnic basis, or non-territorial solutions for distinct ethnic communities. However, each community, each case has to find its own model, whether territorial, cultural and personal autonomy or just power-sharing. Existing solutions cannot be automatically imported, while existing models can contribute to finding new, viable solutions.



Co-organiser MEP Kinga Gál (EPP-ED Group)

The analysed case studies show that diversity, the development of certain communities, certain regions are of the benefit of the whole society, and states should take advantage of this in order to enable all coexisting communities to take advantage of the possibilities offered by the EU.

Transylvanian Monitor is available here:

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HUNGARIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TRANSYLVANIA
SZÉKELY NEMZETI TANÁCS

The Hungarian National Council of Transylvania is a public organisation, which aims at representing the interests of the indigenous Hungarian community through parliamentary structures and means by preparing, sustaining and proposing for approval legal measures to ensure the forms of autonomy demanded by the community.

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