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# Transylvanian Monitor

minority and human rights watch

## **REPORT** **on the Shortcomings of the Hungarian Public and Higher Education in Romania**

The 1.4 million strong Hungarian community of Transylvania has been claiming since 1989 the following regarding mother tongue education:

### 1. With respect to public education:

- a.) the creation of a Hungarian public education organisation with the powers of a state-run organisation, to serve as a network of school inspectorates for Hungarian schools and which would be responsible for modernising the education process, elaborating curricula, manuals, tests for evaluating and qualifying the schools,
- b.) the introduction of proper Romanian language tests, i.e. Romanian as a second language type tests instead of Romanian as mother tongue type tests for ethnic Hungarian pupils and students,
- c.) the creation of a job position and the allocation of funds for the co-ordination of the Hungarian education within the Bacau County School Inspectorate in order to promote the education in the mother tongue of the Hungarian Csángó community, and the setting up of kindergarten groups and elementary school classes for Csángó Hungarians,
- d.) to lift the restrictions that denominational schools are facing if wishing to set up classes for lay education purposes,
- e.) to allow that the subjects 'Geography of Romania' and the 'History of Romanians' be thought in the Hungarian language.

### 2. With respect to higher education:

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

## DEMANDS TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION HAVE BEEN CONTINUOUSLY REJECTED

- **1990:** Delegates of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) called for the re-establishment of the Hungarian-language 'Bolyai' University. The Romanian President Ion Iliescu denied the demand. Institution of Hungarian-language Agrarian, Medicine, Pharmacy, Veterinary Medicine and Engineering education was also blocked.
- **1995:** The DAHR collected over 500,000 signatures in order to support the amendment of the Law on Education. Most of the intended amendments failed. The restoration of Hungarian-language Music and Music Teacher education was demanded without results.
- **1998:** The DAHR submitted to the Romanian Parliament two bills on the establishment of a state-financed Hungarian-language university, and threatened to quit the government coalition if the demand was not fulfilled. A Government Decree satisfied the demand, but the university was still not founded due to heavy opposition. The bills were rejected in 2001.
- **1999:** The great majority, 77% of the Hungarian staff of the Medical and Pharmacy University in Targu. Mures/Marosvasarhely, asked for the autonomy of the Hungarian section. The demand was ignored.
- **2000:** Attempts to establish Hungarian-language higher education in Engineering Sciences in Targu. Mures/Marosvasarhely and Hungarian faculties at the 'Babes-Bolyai' University were blocked.
- **2004:** The DAHR established a governing pact with an agreement that Hungarian faculties would be founded at the 'Babes-Bolyai' University. The initiative failed due to the opposition of the University management.
- **October 2005:** A series of protests were held in four cities of Transylvania, in which thousands of people demanded the re-establishment of the Hungarian-language 'Bolyai' University.
- **November 2005:** A demand for creating three Hungarian faculties at the 'Babes-Bolyai' University, signed by 83% of the Hungarian professors involved, was submitted to the highest decision-making organ of the University. The demand was ignored.
- **February 2006:** 11 Nobel, Fields and Wolf Laureates, and another 70 academics from all over the world support the re-establishment of the Hungarian-language 'Bolyai' University. The management of the 'Babe;-Bolyai' University is harassing the organizers and is pursuing a campaign of misinformation to achieve the withdrawal of the signatures. Romanian political leaders also ignore the demand.

## **Discriminatory measures and circumstances against the Hungarian language public and higher education**

### **Concerns about public education**

The Hungarian language public education in Romania has a number of shortcomings that remained unanswered for the last 15 years mostly due to political reasons. Nonetheless, these shortcomings are much of a concern as they considerably deteriorate the young Hungarians' chances to pursue their studies or a career. Moreover, the quality of the higher education process in the Hungarian language is seriously impacted, and, among others, faster assimilation is hastened.

The following is a brief description of the specific issues hindering the development of the Hungarian language public education system in Romania.

The Hungarian language public education is developed at an average level. Unfortunately, no accurate figures are available on how many Hungarian pupils give up school before graduation or how many switch to Romanian language classes. The 2002 census data however reveal that there are approx. 93,000 Hungarians in the 15-19 age group, i.e. there should be about 23,000 students in each of the four secondary school years. In contrast, data show that a mere number of 7,200 students take their graduation exams (baccalaureat) in the Hungarian system. The loss is much larger than the national average, as in Romania there are about 1,600,000 in the 15-19 age group, i. e. about 400,000 pupils in each year, including the final year, out of which approx. 180,000 graduated from secondary school in 2005. Moreover, losses are expected to be higher as the number of Hungarian children in the rural areas is growing and the propensity to go on to high school is lower in the rural areas. The remedy to this situation is the creation of a public education organisation for Hungarians with the powers of a state-run organisation, which would be responsible for education development planning, elaboration of curricula, preparation of manuals, translation of tests, organisation of teacher training programmes, evaluation and qualification of schools and also, possibly the improvement of life standards of teachers. This organisation would function with the powers of a state school inspectorate. This is necessary as the co-operation with the inspectorates run by the Romanian majority often lacks the responsiveness towards the specific minority education issues.

The Romanian language as a subject matter is taught in school for minority children not as a second language but rather as if that was their mother tongue, and thus, tests and graduation exams are designed as such. Consequently, Hungarian students fail to a greater extent the exams, and are presumably disadvantaged with respect to their chances of admission to higher education institutions.

According to point 2 of paragraph 120 of the law on education in Romania the subjects 'Geography of Romania' and the 'History of Romanians' are taught in the Romanian language in the 5th-12th grades of the Hungarian schools as well. The Hungarian community has requested that these subject matters be taught in Hungarian for over a decade.

In the Csángó region there is no public education institution to teach all subject matters in Hungarian. However, the teaching of the Hungarian language has started from scratches. The Hungarian language is taught in 13 villages for around 950 pupils by commuter teachers. These teachers are paid a symbolic fee by the Romanian state, while the extension of the education is being blocked by the management of the schools. Nevertheless, Hungarian language teaching could be extended to further 50 villages and some 10,000 pupils if proper financial support and authority were insured. This imperatively requires the creation of a job position and the allocation of funds for the co-ordination of

the Hungarian education within the Bacau County School Inspectorate. The proper grounds for education in the Hungarian language should be created, first and foremost kindergarten groups and then primary and secondary school classes should be initiated. In addition, the mass secondary education of Csángó Hungarians remains an unsolved issue. Until now the Government of Hungary financed the education of some 100 secondary school students in Miercurea Ciuc/Csíksereda. The solution would be the allocation of Romanian governmental funds, and, more importantly, the Romanian government support given to create a Hungarian language secondary school in Bacau.

Government funded denominational schools are regarded according to the Orthodox model as training institutions for priests by the Romanian law on education. Church schools may only start lay education classes, e.g. IT or vocational education classes on a special licence issued on an annual basis by the Romanian line ministry. However, the law does not explicitly state this, so it always depends on the free will of the school inspectorates and the education ministry. We would like to reach that the restrictions imposed on church schools be lifted with respect to their intention to set up classes for lay education purposes.

### **Concerns about higher education**

Not lesser are the concerns about the higher education. According to the statistics of the Romanian Ministry of Education and Science (2005), the total number of students in higher education is approximately 650,000. The number of Hungarian students is only 29,000, which represents 4.4% of the total, although 6.6% of the population are ethnic Hungarian. Less than half of the Hungarian students, around 10,000 study in Hungarian, which represents 1.6% on the national level. State financed Hungarian higher education barely covers a small part of the education needs in fine arts, and completely lacks technical, agricultural or veterinarian training. This happens in spite of the fact that the necessary higher education teaching staff is available. Sapiientia University is not given any Romanian state funding.

Teaching of the shortfall professions could be partially solved at the Technical University of Cluj/Kolozsvár, the 'Ion Andreescu' Art Academy, the Agricultural and Veterinary University of Cluj/Kolozsvár and by setting-up a Hungarian class within the Faculty of Music Pedagogy of the 'Gheorghe Dima' Music Academy. However, the two latter institutions refused to allow Hungarian classes. Developments are hindered not only because of the shortage of students, which is due both to demographic reasons and the lack of a proper public education system, but also by the blocking of the restoration of the state financed Hungarian university. The DAHR collected in 1995 over 600,000 signatures in favour of the re-establishment of the state financed Hungarian university, which clearly proves that the Hungarian community stood up as one in support of the cultural autonomy, including the creation of an autonomous Hungarian higher education system. At present, Hungarian higher education activities are organised in 8 Romanian institutions, but only 4 of them are supported by the Romanian government. The flagship institution is the 'Babes-Bolyai' University, with approximately 10,000 ethnic Hungarian students, out of them approximately 6,000 studying in Hungarian; still, the Hungarian academic community at the institution may not take independent decisions. Academic structures are organised vertically, based on classic hierarchy (departments, faculties). Various sections teaching in different languages horizontally cross the university structures, thus, they do not help, but actually create more confusion in its functioning. The classes of the Hungarian section are scattered over several departments, therefore it is difficult to designate a job position covering a specific department. Filled and open positions are now 60% to 40%. Several faculties, e.g. law, economic sciences, geology do not employ sufficient number of teachers who could instruct students in the Hungarian language. The institution, which is very much liked to be called 'multicultural', completely misses Hungarian language signs, and rooms or halls named after Hungarian scientists are scarce.

The creation of the Hungarian faculties of Natural Sciences, Humanities, as well as Social and Economical Sciences at the 'Babes-Bolyai' University is the most urgent matter as the first step to re-establish the 'Bolyai' University. The demand for creating the three Hungarian faculties was signed by 149 Hungarian professors (83% of those involved), and submitted to the management of the University in November 2005. This step is considered to be of paramount importance by the Hungarian teaching staff, and enjoys the support of the DAHR as well. They believe that the creation of the Hungarian faculties can be achieved in the 2005/2006 academic year from a political aspect as well. The creation of a department is not a genuine solution as the powers of a department are very limited as compared to those of a faculty.

The operating and development costs of the 'Sapientia' University are fully covered by the Hungarian government, while the institution trains Romanian citizens. A considerable part of the costs should be paid by the Romanian government, and the Hungarian state subsidy should cover for the development of the 'Sapientia' University and the improvement of the quality of the full Hungarian higher education in Romania.

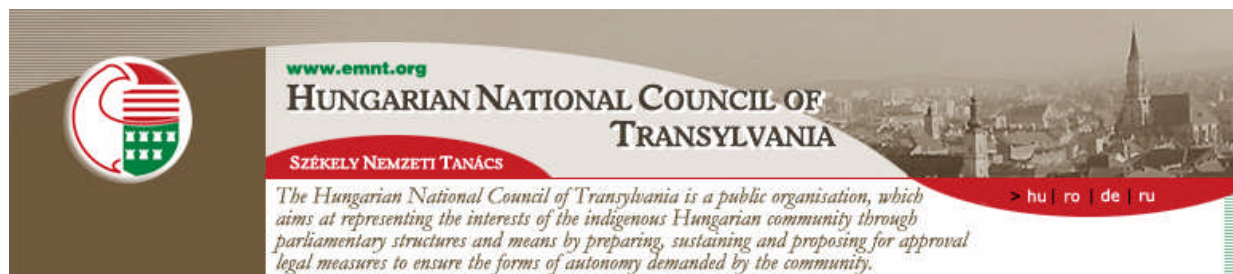
To achieve these goals several steps have been made. One of the important steps was the *European Minority Higher Education Conference*. Twenty-five European minorities have sent their representatives to that event. The conference succeeded in creating a detailed database, which clearly shows that minorities far smaller in number are able to successfully operate a network of higher education institutions. It has also become obvious that, on the European level, it is the Hungarian community in Romania, the Ukraine and Serbia that have to endure the direst circumstances. The database is available at <http://conf.bolyai-u.ro>

The technical preparations of the re-establishment of the 'Bolyai' University are underway. Presently, a detailed socio-demographic and economic study is being carried out. It has to be taken into account that the management of the 'Babes-Bolyai' University will probably attempt, with the backing of the Romanian political elite, to deny any rights of the Hungarian community, i.e. they will refuse to hand over the fair proportion of the university infrastructure (approx. 25%) as well as the campuses set up in Szekler-Land. All measures will be taken in Romania and abroad to prevent this unfair attempt.

In perspective, the Hungarian education system in Romania is the closest integration into the education system of Hungary, the creation of independent higher education institutions through the spinning off of the present Hungarian sections, as well as the Hungarian University Consortium to be established with the integration of the 'Sapientia' University.

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Transylvanian Monitor is available at: [www.emnt.org](http://www.emnt.org)



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