

## WHY IS HUNGARIAN SPEAKING HIGHER EDUCATION NEEDED IN ROMANIA?

One of the main tools of the Romanian policy of **assimilation** has been the gradual - at least partial - elimination or Romanianisation of Hungarian speaking education at every level. Aware of this and taking advantage of the political and social changes brought about by the events of 1989, the ethnic Hungarian community in Transylvania began its struggle for restoration of mother tongue education.

Higher education is an extremely important field of education in the Hungarian language. Higher education in the mother tongue is increasingly important for the formation of a competitive Hungarian intellectual echelon. Without this, the social structure of the Hungarian community in Romania will be distorted, and resistance to forced assimilation will be impossible. The loss of Hungarian speaking higher education also has negative effects on lower level education in the mother tongue, and only encourages the mass **emigration** of the ethnic Hungarian population of Romania. Thus, the provision of its own higher education in the mother tongue is a vital priority for the Hungarian community in Romania.

The Romanian **Law on Education** of 1995 that was finally adopted in 1999 does not provide for the establishment of independent Hungarian speaking state university institutions. On the other hand, the existing framework of state higher education is still limiting, repressive and discriminative of education in the Hungarian language. That is how approximately **15,000** ethnic Hungarian students attend Romania's institutions of higher education, despite the fact that given the ethnic Hungarian nation's size as a proportion of general population they should number around **25,000**. Furthermore, only **5,000** out of the 15,000 Hungarian students have the opportunity of an education - at least in part - in their mother tongue. For this very same reason, thousands of Transylvanian ethnic Hungarian young people study at universities in Hungary, and experience has proved that the great majority of them will not return to their native land.

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INDEPENDENT HUNGARIAN SPEAKING PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN TRANSYLVANIA AND PARTIUM

As a response to a real need and in order to fulfill their common objectives, the Hungarian historic churches in Romania (Roman Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran and Unitarian) - in consultation with and supported by the government of Hungary decided to establish a **private ecclesiastical university system**. The main pillars of this university system will be in Nagyvárad/Oradea, Kolozsvár/Cluj and in the Székely-land (eastern Transylvania). They endowed the Sapientia Foundation. The two billion Hungarian forint capital of the Sapientia Foundation in Kolozsvár/Cluj has been provided by the government of Hungary.

## THE PARTIUM CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Bearing in mind the difficult educational conditions and with the intention of the future foundation of a university, the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District had already established the Sulyok István College in Nagyvárad/Oradea in 1991. As the successor of the **Sulyok István College**, the **Partium Christian University** came to existence in September 1999, as the first active institution of the planned Hungarian speaking private university system in Romania.

The Partium Christian University was established by the Pro Universitate Partium Foundation. Church leaders and politicians initiated its foundation. International standards being what they are, it is a pressing necessity that the approximately 600,000 Hungarian speaking people of Partium (this historic name refers to the western and south-western part of Romania) have their own university institution.

The Partium Christian University, developed from the Sulyok István College, has obtained the operating licenses prescribed official accreditation procedures, and it operates on a regular basis with a professional teaching staff.

## Brief history of Transylvania

996–1526: part of the Hungarian Kingdom

1526–1711: independent Principality

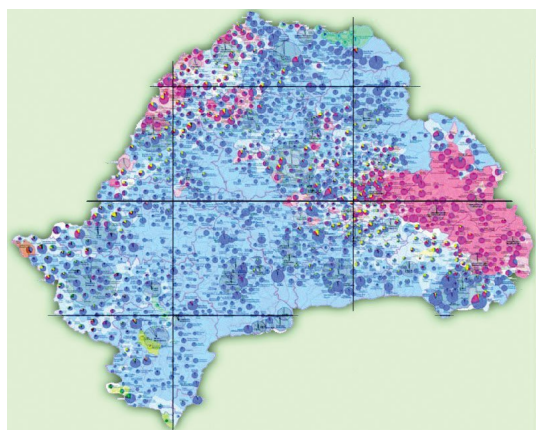
1711–1867: part of the Habsburg Empire

1867–1919: part of the Hungarian Kingdom

1919–1940: part of the Romanian Kingdom

1940–1945: northern Transylvania returned to Hungary

1945– part of Romania



The Hungarian community of Transylvania lives in a massive block in the region called the Szekler-land (ca. 20,000 sq km). <http://www.insse.ro/RPL2002INS/index4.htm>

Of Transylvania's 7 million inhabitants 1.5 million are Hungarian and represent 6.6% of Romania's population and 21% of Transylvania's population, being the second largest traditional national minority in Europe. Please note that the proportion of Hungarians in Transylvania in 1910 was of 31%.

## The beginning

The first higher educational institution was established in 1581 by Stephanus BÁTHORY, Prince of Transylvania and King of Poland. Another academy was founded by Prince Gabriel BETHLEN in 1622.

## After the Second WW

For political considerations the Romanian Government decided the establishment of the Hungarian Bolyai University in Cluj/Kolozsvár. At the same time, the Romanian Babes University was also created in Cluj/Kolozsvár.

In 1959 the Hungarian Bolyai University was forced to merge with the Babes University, and thus, resulted in the Babes-Bolyai University. This operation, which deeply hurt the interests of the Hungarian community and led to the suicide of several Hungarian professors, was orchestrated by Nicolae Ceausescu, the former Romanian dictator, and Ion Iliescu, the former Romanian President. Between 1959 and 1989 the Hungarian education at the Babes-Bolyai University was almost entirely liquidated.

**Present: The Higher Education in Romania does not meet the expectations of the Hungarian minority**

[http://www.edu.ro/minoritati\\_8.html](http://www.edu.ro/minoritati_8.html)  
<http://conf.bolyai-u.ro> (database)

The Hungarian community is underrepresented in the higher education of Romania. Although Hungarians represent more than 6.6% of the total population in Romania, only 4.4% of students in higher education are ethnic Hungarians, out of which only 1.6 % enjoy the opportunity to study in Hungarian.

Total number of Students in Romania  
600,000 100%

Total number of Hungarian students  
26,000 4,4%

Number of Hungarian students  
studying in Hungarian  
10,000 1,6%

**Should be 6,6%**

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There is no public Hungarian higher education in a series of important fields, such as all engineering sciences, arts, agriculture, forestry science and veterinary medicine.

The case of the Partium Christian University, founded in 1999, and that of the Sapientia University, founded in 2000, which teach in the Hungarian language, is perhaps unprecedented: they are financially supported only by the Hungarian state, although the Hungarians in Romania pay taxes to Romania, and not to Hungary.

There are serious shortcomings in the Hungarian public education as well. Whereas in kindergartens the proportion of the Hungarian children is 6.58%, corresponding to the weighting of the Hungarian population in Romania, this number decreases to 3.97% in high-schools.

**The situation  
at the “multicultural” Babes-Bolyai University**

<http://conf.bolyai-u.ro> (database, photo gallery)

In some fields, such as Law, the number of Hungarian professors is at a very low level, forcing students to study a series of subjects in the Romanian language.

The image of the university is built almost exclusively on Romanian symbols:

- there are no Hungarian inscriptions
- University publications of general interest are issued almost exclusively in Romanian
- Diplomas are issued only in Romanian
- the Hungarian language cannot be used as a language of formal communication within the University.

**Recommendations of Max van der Stoep are neglected! (e.g. Letter to the former rector Andrei MARGA, ref. no. 11/2000)**

The Hungarian community at the University has no autonomy: decision-making is based on majority vote, Hungarian representatives can always be oppressed during this procedure.

#### **THE DEMANDS OF THE HUNGARIANS IN TRANSYLVANIA**

Re-Establishment of the public (state-financed) Hungarian-language Bolyai University

**• as a first, URGENT step:**

establishment of Hungarian faculties at the Babes-Bolyai University

**• as soon as possible:**

25% of the Babes-Bolyai University's infrastructure including the campuses in the Szeklers' Land should be given to the future Bolyai University

**• Higher education using the Hungarian language should be significantly broadened**

**• Autonomy should be given to the Hungarian public education**

**These demands were supported by more than 600,000 signatures, gathered by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, without any results.**

**• Partium Christian University and Sapientia University should be financed by Romania as well**

Hungarians of Romania pay taxes to Romania, not to Hungary...

***The denial of these rights can lead to serious tensions in the South Eastern European Region***

**Some of the Traditional National Minorities in Europe:**

Catalans in Spain – 6,000,000

Hungarians in Romania – 1,500,000

Albanians in Macedonia – 700,000

Basque in Spain – 700,000

Hungarians in Slovakia – 600,000

Welsh in Great Britain – 600,000

Germans in South Tyrol – 300,000

Hungarians in Serbia – 300,000

Swedes in Finland – 300,000

Gagauz in Moldova – 150,000

Hungarians in Ukraine – 150,000

Sami in Northern Europe – 80,000

The Catalan, Albanian, Swedish, Gagauz and Sami minority as well as the Hungarian minority in Slovakia enjoy the benefits of monolingual public university or universities.

The Welsh and Basque minorities as well as the German minority in Italy have the use of truly multicultural public universities.

<http://conf.bolyai-u.ro>

#### Contact

#### Hungarian National Council of Transylvania Education Committee

Avram Iancu St. 27

400083 Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár), Romania

tel.: +40-722-234790,

+40-722-824515 (Péter HANTZ)

fax: +40-264-593648

[www.emnt.org](http://www.emnt.org)

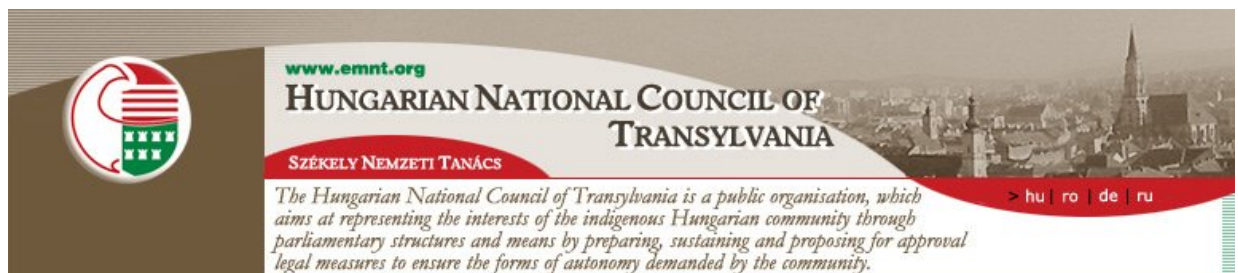
e-mail: [oktatas@emnt.org](mailto:oktatas@emnt.org)



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***Transylvanian Monitor is available here:***

**[www.emnt.org](http://www.emnt.org)**



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Edited by the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania; drafted by János Antal and Zsolt Szilágyi  
RO-410095-Oradea, str. J. Calvin 1; fax: +40 259 432837; email: [antaljanos@partium.ro](mailto:antaljanos@partium.ro)

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