

**SHADOW REPORT FOR THE TREATY-BASED COMMITTEE ON THE
ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

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Discrimination Against the Hungarian national minority in Romania

A.) Attempts to Disrupt the Hungarian community in Szeklerland

Preamble

Geographically, the historical *Szeklerland* is located in Transylvania, Romania. It occupies 12,000 square kilometres and is inhabited by almost one million people, more than three-quarters of which are Hungarians. For centuries, *The Szeklerland* has developed into a unitary region in all regards, that is, geographically, historically, economically, culturally and politically alike. However, in the 20th century it underwent major changes, i. e., its territory has been chopped up. Nowadays, the entire territory of Harghita County and Covasna County as well as a significant part of Mureş County are inhabited by *Szeklers*, while some Hungarian settlements have been excluded from these counties. Historically, from the 13th century onwards, the units of territorial organisation of *Szekler* society were the so-called ‘seats’ (in Hungarian, ‘szék’). These were Marosszék, Udvarhelyszék, Csíkszék, Gyergyószék, Kászonszék, Sepsiszék, Kézdiszék, Orbaiszék and Bardocz-Miklósvárszék – forming together the historical *Szeklerland*. Just like in the case of the Transylvanian Saxon Seats, the autonomy of the *Szekler* Seats entailed a local government with an administration of its own, a specific social and administrative structure, special rights and special legal status, including tax exemption.

In spite of the abolition of the Seats system and of almost fifty years of harsh oppression by the Communist totalitarian regime, the emblematic *Szekler* identity has not been broken and the endeavours for autonomy of endless lines of generations have not been quenched. Today, according to European legal practice, it would be again possible to grant special legal status to *Szeklerland*. The determination to do away with the *Szekler* identity, however, still lingers on either in a straightforward in a concealed manner.

Since the regime change in 1989, the Hungarian national community in Romania has continuously been fighting to achieve fully equal rights, similar to those enjoyed by the Romanian majority. The means to which this community resorted in order to achieve its goals have always been democratic as well as exclusively peaceful and legal. According to the leaders of the Hungarian community, the solution should be the enactment of a legal framework guaranteeing the introduction of various forms of community autonomy based on the principle of internal self-determination. The most important steps of the process of reaching autonomy in the last 20 years of slow democratisation were the following:

- Since its foundation in 1990, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR), the organisation representing the Hungarian community in the Romanian legislature, voiced the Hungarian claims for autonomy, specifying the legal forms of the latter as well as the various types of community self-government. The Kolozsvár / Cluj-Napoca Declaration (signed on the 24th of October 1992) formulates expressly these demands.
- On the occasion of Romania's admission to the Council of Europe (the 26th of August 1993), the DAHR presented a memorandum to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, wherein the organisation repeatedly asserted the rightful claim of the Hungarian community in Romania to internal self-determination and requested the acknowledgment of Hungarians as a constituent entity of the Romanian state. On this occasion, an Opinion of the Council of Europe (No. 176/1993) was made public and Romania assumed full responsibility to comply with the recommendations formulated therein. Nonetheless, no legal framework designed to implement community autonomy has been established ever since.
- In autumn 1993 (the 14th of November), the DAHR submitted to the Romanian parliament its own bill on national minorities and autonomous communities. This document laid down a model of self-government on three-levels; namely, the levels of cultural autonomy, local autonomy with special status and the third one, the regional territorial autonomy. The Romanian majority in the legislative body did not vote the bill justifying their action with the allegedly unconstitutional character of the document.
- During the amendment of the Romanian Constitution (in 2003), the DAHR's attempt to include in it the rights of minorities to cultural and territorial autonomy remained unsuccessful.
- The Hungarian National Council of Transylvania (HNCT – in Hungarian, *Erdélyi Magyar Nemzeti Tanács*, EMNT) was founded on the 15th of December 2003 as a partly civic and partly political movement with the purpose of expressing the widespread social support for the forms of autonomy envisaged by the Hungarian community.

- In 2004, the Romanian Parliament rejected the draft ‘statute’ on the territorial autonomy of *Szeklerland* by declaring it unconstitutional (2004). A second rejection was the reaction to the bill submitted in the following parliamentary session (2005).
- In 2004, the DAHR drafted a Bill on the Legal Status of National Minorities, which was acclaimed even by the Venice Commission. The Romanian Cabinet supported the bill outlining the legal framework of cultural autonomy to be granted to minority communities and, in 2005, submitted it to Parliament. Once received by Parliament, various standing committees were supposed to review the document. However, their ‘work’ on the bill came to a deadlock and no report has been filed on it ever since.
- Thirty *Szekler* local governments initiated local referenda on creating through the voluntary association of the respective settlements the administrative region called *Szeklerland*, which was supposed to enjoy special legal status. The resolutions on the announcement of the referenda’s day were nullified without exception by the prefects (in 2006-2007).
- In 2007, more than 210,000 voters from *Szeklerland* voted ‘yes’ to the territorial autonomy of the region.
- On the one hand, thanks to various measures taken by Parliament and Government alike in the last five years, education in native language and the right to use one’s native language in local administration have been augmented. On the other hand, even if people are entitled to use their first language in court, judges – in various localities – prevent them from exercising this right.
- The most significant objective for the coming years will be the legal recognition of collective rights and their implementation.

The present memorandum aims at taking another resolute step towards achieving these goals. It asserts that the 1,5 million strong Hungarian community in Romania, including the *Szekler* (in Hungarian ‘székely’) population representing the absolute regional majority in *Szeklerland*, are not willing to give up neither their native land, nor their specific community identity. Hungarians form a majority in two counties, respectively in Harghita (84,6%) and in Covasna (73,79%), and are present significantly in Mures (39,30%). Hungarians form a 76,24 % majority in the region of Szeklerland

(<http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/RPL2002INS/vol4/tabele/t1.pdf>)

Problems in *Szeklerland*: factors endangering the organic regional development and the specific identity of its inhabitants

20 years after the regime change entailing the creation of democratic institutions and the establishment of rule of law, there are still numerous factors hindering the economic, social, and political blossoming of *Szeklerland* and the emancipation of its inhabitants.

Institutional hindrances to the use of the native language

Although legislation in force, governing various areas of the public sphere, allows persons belonging to national minorities to use their first language, the native language of Hungarians representing the majority population in *Szeklerland* is still considered of lesser status than the Romanian language. For instance:

- Official documents published by state authorities (such as administrative and educational institutions) are written solely in Romanian.
- In the so-called ‘de-concentrated institutions’ of central administration, clerks speak only Romanian.

The postponement of administrative decentralisation is a direct consequence of the principle of ‘the centralised national state’.

Romania’s administrative system is still strongly centralised. In case of several public services – such as education, culture, employment, social benefits, public order and control over economic activities – most administrative competencies have not been transferred to elected bodies, but to de-concentrated institutions led by chief executives appointed by state officials in central administration. In what regards their decisions and management practices, these executives most often represent state interests and secure that such interests prevail over the legitimate interests of local communities.

Disproportionate ethnic representation in regional offices of central administration

The prevalence of the Romanian national state’s interests can be noticed best in the case of appointing the chief executives of de-concentrated institutions. While the proportion of the Hungarian population in the region is 80%, the ratio of appointed Hungarian officials is less than 20%.

Discrimination in economy and regarding the state budget

It can be proved that when the DAHR is part of the government coalition; the financial support and budget allocations for the *Szekler* counties increase. However, if the DAHR is in the opposition, which was the case for more than a decade, the policy targeting the isolation of the *Szeklerland* (re)gains (its) impetus. The funds for supporting the system of *Szekler* cultural and social institutions are reduced to a level on which their normal functioning cannot be secured. In addition, budget allocations for investments in process continue to diminish steadily.

The delay of infrastructure development

The development of *Szeklerland*’s infrastructure progresses in a deliberately slow pace or in some cases is neglected altogether. In contrast, other rather backward regions of the country, especially Moldova or the southern part of Romania experience swift development. According to traditional political practice, the transferring of budgetary allocations for infrastructure development should be perceived as a reward for the ‘correct’ political behaviour of local officials, while the withholding of such funds as punishment for ‘incorrect’ political behaviour. In 2008, the newly formed Cabinet promised – probably as part of its own propaganda – that the development of *Szeklerland* would still receive special attention.

However, the massive infrastructure development initiated five years ago, as a result of the DAHR's presence in the coalition government, lost its momentum in the meantime. Moreover, the rhythm of the works slowed down so much that even the continuation of the repairs already in progress can be called into question.

The exploitation and the vendition of natural resources are state monopoly

Generally, the exploitation of natural resources in Romania is in the hands of the state, more precisely, is state monopoly. If one took into account the specific situation, he/she could easily realise that in case of *Szekler* strategic reserves – first and foremost salt and mineral water – intervention carried out by the central state administration has ethnic connotations. In addition, state control regarding the exploitation of natural resources also means that licences and contracts are awarded on a preferential basis, excluding local investors. Furthermore, ambiguous regulations and laws create unnecessary difficulties for owners in what concerns investments. Moreover, the duties charged for exploitation represent revenues for the central state budget. The situation in forestry is not better either. State control characterizes this branch of economy, too: the activity of private businesses and local collective ownerships is hindered through bureaucratic and other means.

Issues of environmental protection

Szeklerland is defenceless against the state, in this respect, too, since environmental protection and the monitoring of potentially hazardous activities is not a competency of local elected bodies, but of ones appointed and controlled by the state. This environmental protection practice, which often goes against regional interests, has a negative impact not only upon the quality of life, but, in the long run, it has a detrimental effect on the main branches of *Szeklerland's* regional economy, namely tourism, logging and wood processing.

Delays in the restitution of confiscated private property

Though the process of returning properties confiscated by the Communist regime to their previous owners, progresses at a very slow pace throughout the country, this 'practice' is far more obvious in *Szeklerland*, especially when it comes to the former assets of the Hungarian historical churches and the so-called Csíki Private Property.

The Communist regime seized 2,140 properties from the Transylvanian-Hungarian historical churches. If the state does not return the illegally confiscated plots of land and buildings belonging to the four historical religious denominations – the Roman Catholic, the Calvinist, the Lutheran and the Unitarian –, the churches will be unable to continue the spiritual and charitable work they undertook for many centuries in order to secure the survival and the prosperity of the Hungarian community in Transylvania. Laws on restitution were passed as early as two decades ago. Still, more than one-third of the former assets of Hungarian churches in *Szeklerland* have not been returned to their rightful owners. Furthermore, no process of compensation has been initiated with regard to assets that cannot be returned.

The hazard and practice of artificial changes in ethnic proportions

Although the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities ratified by Romania prohibits the artificial change of the ethnic composition of regions where minorities live in significant numbers, in the case of *Szeklerland*, this kind of totalitarian practice and policy

continues even after two decades from the regime's fall. The fact that 'the Romanian majority' lives as a local minority in a given region (the *Szeklerland*), is deemed incompatible with the idea of the Romanian national state by some Romanian politicians. This point is clearly proven by the fact that now, when the DAHR is an opposition party in the Romanian Parliament, the number of Hungarian civil servants in *Szeklerland* is being drastically reduced. Today, the proportion of ethnic Hungarians in state institutions in *Szeklerland* is far lower than their proportion in the region's population, while the opposite is true for the Romanian population.

Violence against ethnic Hungarians

Tensions are further amplified by ethnic violence against Hungarians in Romania. In a succession of violent attacks during the last couple of months, Hungarians were attacked, verbally and physically abused for the sole reason of publicly speaking Hungarian. It is unacceptable for anyone to be subjected to violence for belonging to one ethnic group or another. Unfortunately very often the authorities disregard these cases, or even worse, in some cases they are the aggressors.

Legal solution for problems: granting territorial autonomy for *Szeklerland*, thus transforming it into an independent development region with special legal status

The major obstacle to *Szeklerland's* organic development as well as the most important impediment hindering it to experience, enjoy and preserve its own regional and national identity is the historical desire to (over)centralise; a characteristic of the Romanian administration. The solution for the mentioned difficulties is the implementation of the European traditions of subsidiarity and self-government. In other words, one should adopt a special organisational and administrative structure taking into account the region's geographical, historical, economic, social and political characteristics as well as the distinctive cultural and national character of the majority population living in the *Szeklerland*. This means granting territorial autonomy to *Szeklerland*.

The community autonomy of minorities, in general, and the territorial self-government of a historical region constituting the homeland of an indigenous ethnic group living as a minority on the territory of a certain state, but as the regional majority in the respective area, in particular, are solutions that have been implemented as parts of various states' administrative systems in a Europe of states, regions and national communities leading to the normalization of majority-minority relations (see Resolution 1334 (2003) based upon the Gross Report compiled by the European Council).

The *Szeklerland* satisfies the criteria to be met by an autonomous administrative region both from an economic perspective and by virtue of its historical-geographical distinctiveness. These traits are complemented by a sense of community awareness, articulated both politically and regionally, which lead *Szeklers* to express their need for community autonomy on several occasions and in several forms.

A state's territorial and administrative organization is a matter of internal affairs. Nevertheless, the observance of individual and collective rights enjoyed by the citizens of the European Union, including the protection of their identity as communities, the right to self-government and internal self-determination, is an issue that concerns the EU from the perspectives of human rights, stability, and security policy.

The special legal status regarding administrative autonomy

Szeklerland's citizens claim special legal status – safeguarded by the Constitution and by a special law – for their region. They envisage this region as a territory where decisions concerning the future of the area itself and their everyday existence are passed on the local level by bodies that were freely and democratically elected by the region's inhabitants.

The main characteristics of this special legal status regarding the regional self-government claimed by the *Székelys* include the following:

- *Szeklerland*, a region formed as the result of centuries long organic development, should become a single, unitary, and unified regional administrative entity – the autonomous administrative region *Szeklerland* – constituting the middle level of administration between the level of local and central state administration.
- The region should have its own decision-making and executive bodies set up on the basis of democratic elections organized by its citizens. These bodies would assume the role of administrative authorities through exerting their power on the basis of the voters' will. In addition, they would operate within the state's administrative system, and not function in parallel with the latter.
- Various competencies shall be transferred to these bodies that would exercise them as decision-making authorities in accordance to a law regulating the legal status of the region. Only on the basis of such competencies can one offer legitimate solutions to problems presented in previous parts of this memorandum, while taking into account local interests as well, especially in fields like education, culture, public information, the preservation of traditions and national monuments, social and employment issues, exploitation and processing of natural resources, environmental protection as well as public order.
- The free use of one's native language in private and public life is a collective right, which protects national identity and guarantees that it will be passed on to future generations. It is common European practice, stipulated even in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, to grant the language of the community which forms the majority in a particular region (though the community itself lives as a minority in the respective state) the status of regional official language.
- The use of Hungarian national symbols as well as the free usage of the *Szeklers'* specific emblems is also an integral part of national and regional identity, as is the native language.
- The additional expenses resulting from multiculturalism and the special legal status presuppose that a larger share of the tax revenue generated within the region shall remain within the region. The broader economic and budgetary independence are crucial conditions for territorial autonomy.

The Szeklerland as independent development region

The development regions created in 1998, without taking into consideration the economic, geographical, environmental, cultural and historical features of Romania's traditional regions, secure neither economic and social progress, nor higher employment. Furthermore, they do not promote balanced and sustainable economic growth. Data on the utilization of the pre-accession funds (stemming from the PHARE, SAPARD, and ISPA programs) show that in these artificially created development regions the more developed and populated counties obtain larger subsidies, while the smaller and poorer counties continue to remain in an economically backward position.

The operation of regional institutions in charge of elaborating and implementing development policies is heavy-handed and bureaucratic. In fact, these institutions submissively execute orders coming from central state administration. Agency offices embrace neither the idea of partnership, nor the principle of subsidiarity. This is the reason why local governments representing the interests of the primary party (i.e., the local community) seeking development funds become more vulnerable and defenceless. In order to meet the needs of local communities and local governments to apply for and obtain funds it is imperative to rethink, in the near future, the competencies of development agencies on the basis of territorial-geographical considerations.

Furthermore, for the prosperity of *Szeklerland*, it is imperative to redraw and reorganise the development regions and to redesign and reorganise their institutions.

Presently, the administrative units (Mureş, Harghita and Covasna counties) forming the *Szeklerland* belong to the Central Development Region together with three other counties (Braşov, Sibiu and Alba). Thus, the capacity of local governments representing Hungarian settlements situated in this development region is severely limited in what regards the realisation of their interests. As shown by various decisions and executive measures, this state of affairs influences the Hungarian community in an adverse manner. It is telling that Alba county, possessing no information about and having no direct influence on the daily activities of the other five counties, hosts the regional governing body in charge of distributing the development funds stemming from the European Community and choosing the programs deemed worthy of funding.

The *Szeklerland* satisfies all European Union criteria to be met by statistical development regions. The thrift and efficiency requirements set forth by the EU regarding the usage of development funds, will inevitably modify the borders of development regions. In what concerns the establishment of an independent *Szekler* development region, elected officials from the *Szeklerland* demand nothing else than the acknowledgment and observance of the borders defining the organically developed historical regions in Romania and the appropriate reorganisation of institutions responsible for regional development.

About the rights of ethnic Romanians in Szeklerland

From a political point of view and in what regards inter-ethnic accommodation, the situation of the Romanians who live in the region as a minority, while the members of the same ethnolinguistic group form the majority population of the state, is a delicate issue. This sets the standards for the democratic organisation of an administrative region with special legal status. The matter can be settled in a more than satisfactory manner only by securing equal rights to Romanians living in *Szeklerland* and paying special attention to their situation.

Summary

During the last 20 years, the Hungarian community in *Szeklerland* has repeatedly expressed its resolute claim for obtaining territorial autonomy through the enactment of a law awarding special legal status to the region. In their endeavours, Hungarians have always used only democratic, peaceful, and lawful means, such as political statements, petitions, memoranda and bills.

B.) Shortcomings of the Education in the Hungarian Language in Romania

General Presentation

1,5 million people of Romania's 21 million and Transylvania's 7 million inhabitants are Hungarians, representing 6,6% of Romania's general population and 21% of Transylvania's population. Thus, the Hungarian community is one of the largest traditional national minorities of Europe. However, the Hungarian community in Romania is refused the rights that are granted to almost all other national minorities in Europe.

Hungarian community expressed several times its unwavering intent to re-establish the Bolyai University, which has been abolished during the Communist era. The elected representatives of the Hungarian minority drafted numerous official statements, communiqués, bills, and decrees. In order to secure education in the native language, the DAHR proposed a bill on education, which was submitted to Parliament by the said organisation as a citizens's initiative bearing the signatures of more than 500,000 ethnic Hungarians. Later, however, the Parliament did not pass the bill. Only in 1999, did the Romanian Parliament pass some of the stipulations contained in this bill. However, these did not suffice for the re-establishment of the state-financed Hungarian language university. In spite of the human rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the law on education, notwithstanding various international treaties signed by Romania and the realities of the European Union, not a single tangible arrangement has been made thus far in order to fulfil this request. The most notable disadvantage is the fact that the academic fields of study connected to the most important branches of the national economy (engineering and agricultural sciences) are not taught in the native language. The justness of the Hungarian request is highlighted by positive European practice: the Swedes in Finland, the Sami in Norway, the Gagauz people in the Republic of Moldova, the Albanians in Macedonia all have one or more universities of their own where their youth are taught in their respective native language.

The following overview highlights the major areas of discrimination against the Hungarians in the Romanian education system.

1. Higher Education

The Hungarian community is underrepresented in the Romanian higher education system. Although Hungarians represent 6.6% of the general population in Romania, only 4.4% of the students in higher education are ethnic Hungarians, out of which only 1.6% enjoy the opportunity to study in Hungarian (http://www.old.edu.ro/download/Eng_2003.pdf -these are

the most recent statistics, the latest official survey in this respect was being held in 2003. The figures have not changed significantly since then).

1.1. Discrimination in access to education

There is no state-financed Hungarian higher education in a series of important fields, such as Engineering Sciences, Agriculture, Forestry, Fine Arts and Veterinary Medicine. The case of the “Partium” Christian University, established in 1999, and that of the “Sapientia” University, established in 2000, which teach in the Hungarian language, are unprecedented. These institutions are financially supported only by the Hungarian state. Due to financial restrictions, however, only a limited range of fields is taught at these institutions. Statistically speaking, Romania supports one state-financed university for each 400,000 inhabitants; therefore, the Hungarian community should have 3-4 state-financed universities. Presently, there are several state-funded courses in Hungarian language at the Babes-Bolyai University, the Medical and Pharmacy University of Marosvásárhely/Târgu-Mures, and at the University of Dramatic Arts at Marosvásárhely/Târgu-Mures. The Protestant Theological Seminary is sustained by the Protestant Churches, without any governmental support.

1.2. Complaints of the Hungarian community at the Babes-Bolyai University

The Babes-Bolyai University was established in 1959, by the coercive merging of the Hungarian-language Bolyai and Romanian-language Babes Universities. The Babes-Bolyai University has never been officially founded, and it does not have any foundation document. This operation, which deeply undermined 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, a recent Romanian President.

The Babes-Bolyai University has approximately 32,000 full-time students, of which approximately 7,000 are ethnic Hungarian. The University management claims that the institution is a multicultural one, and creates the false impression of providing the Hungarian community with autonomy and equal rights. However, the reality is entirely different.

1.2.1. The Hungarian academic community has no autonomy in decision-making

The main problems concerning the decision-making rights of the Hungarian academic community are caused by contradictory laws and regulations found in the University’s Charter and other documents. Any proposal of Hungarian leaders needs the approval of boards with a Romanian majority.

University officials consequently take advantage of the contradictory nature of these laws and regulations, presenting to the public only those sections that appear to support the decisionmaking autonomy of the Hungarian academic community. However, in daily practice, only the sections disabling the decision-making authority of the Hungarian academic leaders are applied. Since decision-making at the University is based on majority vote, Hungarian representatives can always be silenced by this procedure.

In November 2005, 149 Hungarian professors (83% of those involved) initiated the establishment of three faculties with Hungarian teaching language (Natural Sciences, Humanities, and Social Sciences). Their request has been completely ignored. Note that the Romanian Law on Education (no. 84/1995 - modified and republished in 1999, Art. 123) allows the establishment of Hungarian Faculties and Colleges.

Between December 2006 and January 2007 several actions to collect signatures were carried out, in which 87% of the interested instructors asked for establishing Faculties of Natural Sciences and Letters in Hungarian language.

In several departments, Hungarian colleagues cannot take decisions concerning the subjects they teach in class and / or exam topics. The restriction with the most adverse consequences is that the syllabuses for primary and secondary teacher training depend on the syllabuses elaborated by the Romanian colleagues. It is impossible to take into account the specific issues and problems in Hungarian primary and secondary teacher education, as their syllabuses are direct translations of the corresponding Romanian ones.

1.2.2. Lack of financial autonomy of the Hungarian academic community

The Hungarian community at the University has no financial autonomy, as only the faculties have autonomy in this field and Hungarian departments are non-existent (except for two small Theology departments). Moreover, the Babes-Bolyai University and the Medical and Pharmacy University from Marosvásárhely/ Targu-Mures don't even allocate for their Hungarian sections the funds especially provided by the state budget for minority higher education.

1.2.3. Discrimination in language usage

There are absolutely no Hungarian signs at the University. Note that the Rector of the University took a decision to change this situation, but the decision has never been carried out in practice.

On the Rector's hallway, only the pictures of the previous Romanian rectors are placed on the wall; the Hungarian Rectors are selectively "forgotten". Although the history of the University traces back to 1581, the first relief represents the rector of 1919, the year when the Romanian army occupied Cluj/Kolozsvár. Among others, Rectors of Bolyai University are simply ignored. Note that the Babes-Bolyai University never had a Hungarian rector.

The great majority, about 90%, of the denominated lecture halls are named after Romanian personalities; several are named after foreign personalities, but only a couple of them carry the names of Hungarians, and one of these names is spelled in Romanian (Samuil Brassai instead of Brassai Sámuel). Most of the official publications of the University are published only in Romanian.

The Official Newsletter of the University (Buletinul Informativ) is published only in Romanian. It should be mentioned that this periodical often publishes letters and articles glamorizing the University management. Generally, no critical articles are published. However, in recent months, several letters denigrating Hungarian teaching staff fighting for the autonomy of the Hungarian line of studies were published. No opportunity to answer the criticism was provided in these cases.

The Hungarian language cannot be used in the formal communications of the University.

No applications or petition forms can be written in Hungarian, and no official documents (such as University Diplomas) are issued in Hungarian.

With the clear intention to humiliate the Hungarian community, the University management installed recently a memorial plaque "honoring" Stephanus / István BÁTHORY, King of Poland, Grand Duke of Lithuania and Prince of Transylvania, the founder of the first higher education institution in Transylvania. No Hungarian text is present on the memorial plaque; even the name of King Báthory was written with Romanian orthography, which deeply hurt the Hungarian community and aroused concern due to the intense reactions. Note that even the Latin text was copied incorrectly onto the plaque.

Some of these problems may appear to be small-scale or petty shortcomings, but they illustrate and are emblematic of a deeply ingrained, discriminatory institutional culture, which reflects the monopolistic attitudes of the majority towards the minority.

However, the measures taken by the management of the Babes-Bolyai University against the leaders of the Bolyai Initiative Committee, a civil organization of the Hungarian professors which works for language equality and extending the independence for the Hungarian higher education, cannot be considered any more a negligible problem, since it resembles the mock trials of the communist dictatorship.

The antecedents (of what happened before) have been that Hungarian instructors of the Babes-Bolyai University requested in accordance with multicultural quality of the institution placing multilingual inscriptions (in Romanian, Hungarian and German) in the buildings of the institution, to replace the present monolingual ones (only in Romanian). During 2005 and 2006 the Rector and the Senate of the University took several contrary decisions in this matter. On November 6, 2006 lecturer Peter Hantz placed Hungarian inscriptions below the Romanian ones in three buildings of the University. Within few hours, the security staff broke down and treaded the inscriptions at the instruction of the University leaders. On the same day, the University organized an exhibition at the European Parliament, where announced that multilingual inscriptions were placed in the institution.

On November 27, 2006 the Rector of the Babes-Bolyai University proposed the expulsion of Peter Hantz and Lehel Kovács (the two vice-presidents of the Bolyai Initiative Committee) from the instructors' body. The motion has been adopted by the University Senate on no grounds from the legal point of view, under unclear circumstances and by breaking the procedures. The dismissal of the two Hungarian instructors has brought about wide international protests and has been causing serious tensions in the University even until today.

1.3. Complaints of the Hungarian academic community at the Medical and Pharmacy University in Târgu Mures

The Hungarian students of the Medicinal and Pharmaceutical University asked for the independence of the Hungarian section of the institution already after a few months following the 1989 change of regime. As an answer, an anti-Hungarian pogrom bearing the signs of secret service control emerged in the city.

In the past seventeen years several unsuccessful attempts have been made to create Hungarian language faculties of general medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, within the University, with extensive financial and decision-making powers.

The proportion of Hungarian teachers in the academic staff is only 34%, whereas the share of the Hungarian students is around 50%. This teacher/student ratio has a negative influence on the professional level of the education. Practical training is solely in Romanian language, and Hungarian students can attend many courses also only in Romanian. Hungarian instructors are underrepresented in leading positions as well. At present, none of the deans of the University is ethnic Hungarian; only 3 out of 14 heads of faculties are ethnic Hungarian, moreover only one third of the Committee of the University Senate are ethnic Hungarians. It should be ensured that the Hungarian officials and managers of the University are elected directly by the Hungarian teaching staff. The current practice, according to which Hungarian staff officials are elected by bodies with Romanian majority (Department Councils and Senate), is deemed inappropriate for experience has shown that officials elected by such bodies can seldom represent the interests of the Hungarian community in an efficient manner.

The use of the Hungarian language is not allowed in the administration of the institution, and only a few percent of the administrative staff are ethnic Hungarian. Moreover, Hungarian students are not provided with the opportunity to take their finals, elaborate and defend their thesis in the Hungarian language.

In 1999, 77% of the Hungarian teaching staff requested that the University management create a proper Hungarian faculty with departments and colleges, so that both the Romanian and the Hungarian faculty would be granted the rights to decide upon the education process and the teaching staff, and that the University Charter be amended accordingly. The University management did not reply to the petition, which was not even forwarded by them to the University Senate as the procedure in such cases requires.

In 2007 more than 70% of the Hungarian students from the Medicinal and Pharmaceutical University, i.e. almost 800 Hungarian students have recorded a ten-point petition at the University Rectorship and the Romanian Minister of Education and Research, claiming amongst others the introduction of departments in Hungarian language. At present there is a similar collecting of signatures being carried out among the Hungarian instructors of the University.

2. Primary and secondary education

2.1. Discrimination through language exams

The Romanian language as a subject matter is taught in high-schools for minority children not as a second language, but rather as if it was their mother tongue. Tests and graduation exams are designed accordingly. Consequently, Hungarian students fail the exams to a greater extent than their Romanian counterparts, and are presumably disadvantaged with respect to their chances of admission to higher education institutions. In December 2005, a large number of intellectuals demanded the changing of this situation from the National Agency against Discrimination. After examining the demand, the Agency concluded that it was legitimate. In spite of this, nothing has been done to change the situation.

2.2. Blocking of mother-tongue education of the 'Csángó' Community

The 'Csángós' are a Hungarian-speaking Roman Catholic ethnic group that lives in Moldova, Eastern Romania. In the so-called 'Csángó land' there is no public education institution of any kind teaching subject matters in Hungarian. However, the teaching of the Hungarian language has started from scratch privately. The Hungarian language is taught in 13 villages to around 950 pupils by commuter teachers. The extension of this education is being blocked by the intolerant management of the schools.

The teachers who educate the pupils in Hungarian are being paid part-time, according to the number of hours taught, instead of receiving a monthly salary as is usual in Romania. This situation has several negative consequences that put these teachers at a financial disadvantage compared to their full-time working colleagues.

However, the disadvantages of this situation go beyond salary issues. Their part-time status exclude these teachers from the educational bodies of the schools, a fact that has a number of more serious consequences regarding their status and working situation: they are not viewed as teachers of the local school and full members of the educational body, they do not sign a contract with the school that would state rights and obligations, they are not welcome at teachers' meetings and, as a result, they cannot have a say in the affairs of the

school whose pupils they teach. Nevertheless, Hungarian language teaching could be extended to a further 50 villages and some 10,000 pupils if proper financial support and authority were ensured.

2.3. Undermining the establishment of Hungarian schools

An essential step towards the achievement of cultural autonomy is the (re-)establishment of Hungarian schools. In a number of Transylvanian towns this aim has partly or fully been reached: there are 76 Hungarian high-schools all over the country. However, in several places where the number of pupils would account for the (re-)establishment of the schools, the attempts of the Hungarian communities to do so are being consequently undermined. For example, in the town of Turda/Torda, the Hungarian delegation trying to persuade the local Romanian representatives to enable the re-establishment of the only Hungarian school had to face aggressive, malicious verbal attacks and insults. The widespread protests triggered by this tragedy forced the Romanian authorities to allow the re-establishment of the Hungarian school of Turda/Torda.

In mixed schools Hungarian pupils are disadvantaged from many points of view: for example they are subject to assimilation, they are restricted in the use of their mother tongue and in several instances they are the targets of insults and mockery by their Romanian peers.

For more information on education issues, please visit www.bolyai.eu

The demands of the Hungarians in Transylvania on Education Issues

- Re-establishment of the state-financed Hungarian-language Bolyai University, incorporating the Hungarian section of the Babeş-Bolyai University, as well as the Hungarian section of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Tg. Mureş/Marosvásárhely
- State-financed Hungarian higher education to be significantly broadened. Higher education in the Hungarian language, including Engineering Sciences, Agriculture, Forestry, Veterinary Medicine and Arts, should be available from the taxes of the Hungarian community
- Language equality should be achieved in multilingual institutions
- Discrimination through Romanian language tests against pupils whose native language is other than Romanian not to be allowed
- Partium Christian University and Sapientia University, presently financed only by the Hungarian Government, to be financed by the Romanian state as well We pay taxes to Romania, not to Hungary
- Education in the mother tongue of the Chango-Hungarian community to be enabled and facilitated

THE DENIAL OF THESE DEMANDS CREATES CONTINUOUS TENSIONS IN ROMANIA

The above-mentioned discrimination persists even in the case of a Hungarian political party's participation in the Romanian Government. In this case the level of economic discrimination is slightly evened out, but the linguistic, cultural and educational discrimination, as well as the militarization of the region is still very much an issue.