

Motto:
“From the Nistru to the Tisa/All the Romanian complained to me”⁹².
(Mihai Eminescu)

THE CURRENT VITALITY OF THE ROMANIAN COMMUNITY LIVING IN HUNGARY

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ABSTRACT

One of the Romanian communities living abroad is the one in Hungary. Separated from the Transylvanian Romanians in 1920, though it voted for union with the Kingdom of Romania. The small Romanian community faced then as it does now a serious problem in its own history – the lack of the necessary institutions, which would assure and guard its identity. Without such institutions and the support of the mother country, the small cultural and ethnic enclave is losing its life force with each passing day. The Romanian community from Hungary is feeling abandoned and alone, being forced to confront the onslaught of the host state, and the attempts thereof to undermine the continued existence of the small Romanian community. Among the policies of dissolutions that the Hungarian state is using against these Romanians native to Hungary, the following can be found: the counter-selection of community leaders, the management of self-perception through the falsification of censuses, and the cutting off of access to Romanian-language education at the secondary and higher levels of study. These policies are not only aimed at the Romanian community. Their ulterior gain is to obtain new privileges for the Hungarian community in Romania.

Keywords: Romanian minority in Hungary, social vitality, Romanian-Hungarian relations, abandoned community.

SHORT INTRODUCTION

The European Centre for Ethnic Studies of the Romanian Academy has as its main tasks the investigation and the study of both the situation of Romanian communities inside and outside Romania, and minorities in Romania. The studies it has carried out over the years attest to this. The following studies “The trajectory of young Basarabians coming to study in Romania: between myth and reality”, “The weakening of the Romanian community in Harghita-Covasna: research report”,

⁹² „De la Nistru pân-la Tisa/Tot românul plânsu-mi-s-a”, in Mihai Eminescu, „Doina” [“Doina”], in Mihai Eminescu, *Opere Complete [Complete Works]*, Vol. I., Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House, (s.a.), p. 182.

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“Crihana Veche: monographic album” and “The current state of Romania’s north-western border 100 years after the Treaty of Versailles” are a good example of the activities of the Center⁹⁵.

One of the main points of interest is the situation of the Romanian community from Hungary, a historical community since the Romanians there are native to that land. The predicament of this community didn’t find much attention from the part of the researchers studied after the fall of the communist regime. There are some exceptions worth mentioning, such as for researchers from the Research Institute of Romanians in Hungary, especially Maria Berényi⁹⁶ and Laboratory for Analysis of Information Warfare and Strategic Communication (Larics)⁹⁷. Therefore, the Romanian State and Romanian researchers should start to concentrate their investigations and, thus, their inherently political efforts on the serious predicament of this community, if one is to find solutions to the dangers it is exposed to.

COMMUNITY SITUATION – INDICATOR OF VITALITY

This material focuses on the concept of social vitality as proposed by the great Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga. According to him, social vitality represents “the ability of the members of a people to show cohesion in order to achieve a benchmark, both culturally and economically”⁹⁸.

Another necessary tool for understanding the origin of the social vitality of a given community understood as an integrated whole, is the law of sociological parallelism discovered by Dimitrie Gusti:

“Social will, as the motivation of the existence, relations, and processes of social units, is not an arbitrary construction of the spirit. It can be discovered and precisely characterized by relating economic, spiritual, political, and legal manifestations of cosmological, biological, psychological, and historical frames within the aforementioned manifestations take place. The connection between the economic, spiritual, political, and economic manifestations of a given community and the frames that make them possible constitutes the law of sociological parallelism. There are parallelisms within the frameworks themselves, a parallelism between the extra-social frameworks: cosmological and biological, on the one hand, and social and historical, on the other; then a parallelism within the manifestations, between the constitutive ones: economic and spiritual, and the regulative ones – political and legal; finally, a parallelism between the set of manifestations and the set of frameworks. Parallelism

⁹⁵ For more information: <https://www.cespe.ro/en/home-2/>.

⁹⁶ For more details see: <https://www.romanintezet.hu/index.php> and Maria Berényi’s list of publications: <http://mariaberenyi.hu/>.

⁹⁷ For more information: <https://larics.ro/>.

⁹⁸ „abilitatea membrilor unui popor de a da dovadă de coeziune în vederea atingerii unui obiectiv de referință, atât din punct de vedere cultural și economic”, in Ovidiana Bulumac, *Infrastructură și societate. Considerente teoretice și studii de caz [Infrastructure and Society. Theoretical considerations and case studies]*, Bucharest, Ethnological Publishing House, 2018, p. 148.

means that all these categories do not form relations of logical subordination, nor can they be reduced to one another, *i.e.*, they do not form causal chains between them, but only reciprocal, existential conditions; they can only be understood in their structural unity, as sui generis wholes”⁹⁹.

The social will of the Romanian community manifests itself economically, spiritually, politically, and legally in a cosmological, biological, historical, and psychological frame. Community frames and manifestations are not isolated from each other, but rather intertwine and interfere one with the other.

It should be borne in mind that Romanians live in the midst of the Hungarian nation, and the nation is the most complete social unit:

“The nation is the only social unit that is self-sufficient, in the sense that it does not require for its full realization a more comprehensive social unit, being able to create its own world of values, to establish an end in itself and to find the means to achieve it, *i.e.*, the force of organization and progress in its own composition”¹⁰⁰.

Thus, the vitality of the Romanian community is influenced by the manifestations of the Hungarian nation that create the context within which the Romanian community is bound to live and act. The Romanian minority is also linked to the Romanian nation and state to which it is tethered through state institutions of Romania, which have a duty under the Constitution to protect it. As we shall see, the Hungarian authorities apply a certain treatment to the Romanian minority to obtain extended rights for the Hungarian minority from the neighbouring country.

Due to the Gustian methodology, this text makes use of – the parallelism of frames and manifestations – and the fact of analyzing the treatment of two minorities by two states, the presentation of the ideas contained within the text will proceed in a comparative form.

⁹⁹ „Voința socială, ca motivare a existenței, relațiilor și proceselor unităților sociale, nu este o construcție arbitrară a spiritului. Ea poate fi oricând descoperită și precis caracterizată prin raportarea manifestărilor economice, spirituale, politice și juridice, la ansamblul cadrelor, cosmologic, biologic, psihic și istoric, ceea ce constituie legea paralelismului sociologic. Un întreit paralelism: înlăuntrul cadrelor, un paralelism între cadrele extrasociale: cosmologic și biologic, pe de o parte, și cele sociale și istoric, pe de altă parte; apoi un paralelism în sânul manifestărilor, între cele constitutive: economică și spirituală, și regulative – politică și juridică; în sfârșit, un paralelism între ansamblul manifestărilor și ansamblul cadrelor. Paralelism înseamnă că toate aceste categorii nu formează raporturi de subordonare logică și nici nu pot fi reduse unele la altele, adică nu formează între ele înlănțuiri cauzale, ci numai condiții reciproce, existențiale; ele nu pot fi înțelese decât în unitatea lor structurală, ca totalități sui generis.”, in Dimitrie Gusti, *Pagini alese [Selected pages]*, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1965, pp. 117–118, quoted by Ion Ungureanu, *Paradigme ale cunoașterii societății [Paradigms of societal knowledge]*, Iași, Junimea Publishing House, 2002, p. 111.

¹⁰⁰ „Națiunea este singura unitate socială care își ajunge sieși, în înțelesul că nu cere pentru deplina ei realizare o unitate socială mai cuprinzătoare, fiind în stare să-și creeze o lume proprie de valori, să-și stabilească un scop în sine și să-și afle mijloacele de înfăptuire, adică forța de organizare și propășire în propria ei alcătuire.”, in Dimitrie Gusti, *Cunoaștere și acțiune în serviciul națiunii. Cartea Echipelor [Knowledge and action in the service of the nation. Team Book]*, Vol. I, Bucharest, Royal Cultural Foundation “Prince Carol”, 1939, p. 3.

SPATIAL COORDINATES



Fig. 1 – Areas in Hungary with Romanian population in the 2011 census

The Romanian community in Hungary was located in 2011 in the eastern region/area of Hungary (near the border with Romania) and the area of the country's capital – Budapest¹⁰¹. The situation did not change in 2022: approximately 80% of the community lived in Budapest and the eastern part of the country. Most of the Romanian population in Hungary (approx. 48%) lived in the eastern part of the country, *i.e.*, in the Észak-Alföld and Dél-Alföld region¹⁰². Romanians constitute a majority only in Micherechi. In 2011, from the approximately 2000 inhabitants in 2011 approx. 90% declared themselves Romanians¹⁰³. The four Hungarian counties in which most of the Romanian population can be find are: Bechis (Békés), Hajdú-Bihar, Csongrád and Pest. Most live in Bechiș (Békés) county – approx. 3.868¹⁰⁴ on the border with Romania.

¹⁰¹ Embassy of Romania in Hungary, „Comunitatea română din Ungaria” [“Romanian Community in Hungary”], (s.a.) Available at: <https://budapesta.mae.ro/node/797>, Accessed on: July 2nd, 2019.

¹⁰² Calculations based on data provided by Hungarian Central Statistical Office, “Population by ethnic attributes, county and type of settlement. Census 2022”, Available at: <https://nepszamlalas2022.ksh.hu/en/database/#/table/WBS009>, Accessed on: May 4, 2024.

¹⁰³ Andrei Sebastian Csiplo, „Micherechi, localitate în Ungaria unde românii sunt majoritari” [“Micherechi, a village in Hungary where Romanians are the majority”], in *Corbi Albi*, 2019, Available at: <http://corbiialbi.ro/micherechi-%20localitate%20in%20ungaria%20unde-%20romanii-%20sunt-%20majoritari/>, Accessed on: March 10, 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Calculations based on data provided by Hungarian Central Statistical Office, “Population by ethnic attributes, county and type of settlement. Census 2022”, Available at: <https://nepszamlalas2022.ksh.hu/en/database/#/table/WBS009/N4IgfFpghgJiBcBtEAVaogJQKoBkD6A4mgPIDMIAugDQgDOAljBASgHJoCyAWiDSgJlc0eAAqZ->, Accessed on: May 4, 2024.

A suggestive map¹⁰⁵ from 2011 illustrates the geographical position of the community.

According to the latest Hungarian census (2022), approx. 64% of Romanians in the neighbouring country lived in urban areas¹⁰⁶. In the last two decades, the Romanian community has become increasingly urbanised.

HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

The Romanians in Hungary is a historical autochthonous community that has remained outside the borders of the Romanian state although the representatives sent to the Great Union (26 in number)¹⁰⁷ in Alba Iulia voted for union with the Kingdom of Romania.

Until the time of the Great Union, the community was composed of Dacoromanians (north of the Danube River)¹⁰⁸ and Aromanians (south of the Danube River), both part of Oriental Romanity (ISR).

“Oriental Romanity is an ethnic Romanic composition on a Traco-Dacian basis stretching from the Adriatic to beyond the Bug in today’s Ukraine, across the Carpathian Mountains – from today’s Bohemia (Czechia) to Timoc (today’s Serbia-Bulgaria), and beyond. (...) From the 6th – 7th century onwards, Eastern Romanity is divided into two, with relatively different evolutions: the Dacoromanians and south of the Danube the Aromanians, the Istroromanians, the Meglenoromanians”¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁵ Dorin Lozovanu, „Hărți ale spațiilor locuite de românii din Serbia (regiunea Voivodina), Ungaria, Ucraina (regiunile Odesa, Cernăuți, Transcarpatia)” [“Maps of areas inhabited by Romanians in Serbia (Vojvodina region), Hungary, Ukraine (Odessa, Chernivtsi, Transcarpathia regions)”], in *Institutul Cultural Român*, November 2nd, 2021, Available at: <https://www.icr.ro/praga/harti-ale-spatiilor-locuite-de-romanii-din-serbia-regiunea-voivodina-ungaria-ucraina-regiunile-odesa-cernauti-transcarpatia>, Accessed on: February 17, 2024.

¹⁰⁶ Calculations based on data provided by Hungarian Central Statistical Office, “Population by ethnic attributes, county and type of settlement. Census 2022”, Available at: <https://nepszamlalas2022.ksh.hu/en/database/#/table/WBS009/N4IgFgpgHgJiBcBtEAVaogJQKoBkD6A4mgPIDMIAugDQgDOAljBASgHJoCyAWiDSgJic0eAAqZ->, Accessed on: May 4, 2024.

¹⁰⁷ Ștefan Both, „De ce românii din Ungaria nu au motive să sărbătorească Centenarul. «Această Unire pe noi ne-a lăsat în afara națiunii românești»” [“Why Romanians in Hungary have no reason to celebrate the Centenary. ‘This Union left us outside the Romanian nation’”], in *Adevărul*, December 8, 2018, Available at: https://adevarul.ro/locale/timisoara/deromaniiungaria-nu-motive-sarbatoreasca-centenarul-aceasta-unire-ne-a-lasat-afara-natiunii-romanesti-1_5c0bed38df52022f754065a1/index.html, Accessed on: October 11, 2021.

¹⁰⁸ Gabriel Moisa, „Românii din Ungaria de astăzi. Cronica unui crepuscul programat (I)” [“Romanians in Hungary today. Chronicle of a programmed twilight (I)”], in *Larics*, May 30, 2022, Available at: <https://larics.ro/romanii-din-ungaria-deastazicronicaunui-crepuscul-programat-i/>, Accessed on: August 30, 2022.

¹⁰⁹ „Romanitatea orientală este o alcătuire etnică romanică pe suport traco-dac ce se întinde de la Adriatică până dincolo de Bug, în Ucraina de astăzi, pe toată întinderea Munților Carpați – din Boemia de astăzi (Cehia) până în Timoc (Serbia-Bulgaria de astăzi), și dincolo de aceștia. (...) Începând cu sec. VI–VII, romanitatea orientală este împărțită în două, având evoluții relativ diferite: dacoromânii și la sud de Dunăre aromânii, istroromânii, meglenoromânii.”, in Radu Baltasiu and Ovidiana Bulumac, *Istoria Socială a României. Problematică și actualitate [Social History of Romania. Issues and topicality]*, Bucharest, University of Bucharest Publishing House, 2017, pp. 192–193.

Part of the Romanian community, especially the more educated and wealthier, came from the Balkans, from the city of Moscopole, after its destruction by the Ottoman Empire, contributing massively to the development of Vienna and Budapest¹¹⁰. Notable for their financial support for the Romanian cause were Emanuil Gojdu, Andrei Șaguna, and Atanasiu Grabovsky¹¹¹.

Through the financial support of the Balkan Romanians Buda and Pest (the two cities were united in 1873) became powerful centers of Romanian culture after the 18th century such that “between 1813 and 1825, [Buda] published more Romanian books than Iași or Bucharest”¹¹², and in Pest it was founded by the Romanian parish priest Ioanichie Miculescu “the first Romanian literary magazine with Latin letters”¹¹³.

Macedonian Romanians had a Romanian language school and church after 1809. The school functioned for 80 years, and the church still exists today “near Gojdu Courts”¹¹⁴.

One of the most shining Aromanian personalities in Hungary was Bishop Andrei Șaguna, to whom the Romanians of Transylvania owe the re-establishment of the Transylvanian Orthodox Church through intense lobbying in Budapest and Vienna¹¹⁵. He succeeded in obtaining the independence of the re-established Orthodox Church and the repeal of the “Unio Trium Nationum” act by which the Transylvanian authorities had deprived the Romanians of their rights for several centuries¹¹⁶.

Another group of the community, located mainly on the border between Hungary and Romania, was part of the Transylvanian Romanians until 1920. Even though their representatives voted for union with Romania after the First World War, they remained outside the newly formed Romanian state and had to live within the borders of the newly formed Hungarian state. This is why some of the representatives of the community do not refer to Romania as the Mother Country, but as the Language Country because they were never included within its borders¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁰ Bogdan Stanciu, „Interviu cu directorul Institutului de Cercetări al Românilor din Ungaria, Maria Berényi” [“Interview with the Director of the Research Institute of Romanians in Hungary, Maria Berényi”], in *Sinteza Journal*, 2016, Available at: <https://www.revistasinteza.ro/a-fost-o-vreme-cand-la-buda-se-tiparea-mai-multacaromaneascadecat-la-iasi-sau-bucuresti>, Accessed on: October 8, 2021.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹¹² „între 1813 și 1825, când la Buda s-a publicat mai multă carte românească decât la Iași sau la București”, in *Ibidem*.

¹¹³ „prima revistă beletristică română cu litere latine, „Aurora românească”, in *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁶ Aurel Papari, „Un aromân a salvat Transilvania” [“An Aromanian saved Transylvania”], in *Adevărul*, September 7, 2002, Available at: https://adevarul.ro/news/societate/unaromansalvat-transilvania1_50abe1627c42d5a66381bd9d/index.html, Accessed on: October 9, 2021.

¹¹⁷ Ștefan Both, „De ce românii din Ungaria nu au motive să sărbătorească Centenarul. «Această Unire pe noi ne-a lăsat în afara națiunii românești»” [“Why Romanians in Hungary have no reason to celebrate the Centenary. ‘This Union left us outside the Romanian nation’”], in *Adevărul*, December 8, 2018, Available at: https://adevarul.ro/locale/timisoara/deromaniungaria-nu-motive-sarbatoreasca-centenarul-aceasta-unire-ne-a-lasat-afara-natiunii-romanesti-1_5c0bed38df52022f754065a1/index.html, Accessed on: October 11, 2021.

Consequences of the 1920 moment

The “1920 moment” negatively affected the Romanian community in Hungary. It was the first time in its history that the community became a minority in a state. The number of Romanians is significantly reduced: from about 2.5 million (Transylvania, Banat, and Crișana) before 1920 to 23 thousand¹¹⁸.

Incorporation into the new Hungarian state meant the loss of ties with the Romanians of Banat, Crișana, Maramureș, and Transylvania¹¹⁹, a loss that made the preservation of their identity much more difficult. The new minorities in Hungary were deprived of the protection of organizations that pursued their interests, such as the Romanian National Party of Transylvania, Banat, Crișana and Maramureș¹²⁰.

For 25 years they remained without Romanian institutions, the first such institutions having been established, paradoxically, after the establishment of the communist regime in Hungary¹²¹. It was only after 1945 that Romanian schools resumed their activities¹²². The situation was worsened by the fact that not only there were no formal institutions meant to uphold and promote Romanian culture, identity, etc., but there were also no elites capable of creating an organizational infrastructure to support identity because after the Peace of Trianon, the village elites (priests and teachers) left them¹²³.

After the 1990s, and despite receiving help from the Romanian state, the Romanian community from Hungary is still plagued by the issues pertaining to the lack of institutions that make it possible for a community to exist and develop, and to maintain its own identity.

THE PERCEPTION OF THE HUNGARIAN AUTHORITIES AND SELF-IMAGE

Romanians in Hungary are still afflicted by the feeling of being abandoned by their “*Language Country*”¹²⁴. The same feeling was experienced during the interwar

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁹ Gabriel Moisa, „Românii din Ungaria de astăzi. Cronica unui crepuscul programat (I)” [“Romanians in Hungary today. Chronicle of a programmed twilight (I)”], in *Larics*, May 30, 2022, Available at: <https://larics.ro/romanii-din-ungaria-de-astazi-cronica-unui-crepuscul-programat-i/>, Accessed on: August 30, 2022.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹²¹ Ștefan Both, „De ce românii din Ungaria nu au motive să sărbătorească Centenarul. «Această Unire pe noi ne-a lăsat în afara națiunii românești»” [“Why Romanians in Hungary have no reason to celebrate the Centenary. ‘This Union left us outside the Romanian nation’”], in *Adevărul*, December 8, 2018, Available at: https://adevarul.ro/locale/timisoara/de-romanii-ungaria-nu-motive-sarbatoareasca-centenarul-aceasta-unire-ne-a-lasat-afara-natiunii-romanesti-1_5c0bed38df52022f754065a1/index.html, Accessed on: October 11, 2021.

¹²² *Ibidem*.

¹²³ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁴ Sebastian Olaru, „Meleşcanu: În Ungaria avem o comunitate care se confruntă cu probleme reale de supraviețuire” [“Meleşcanu: In Hungary we have a community facing real problems of survival”], in *Agerpres*, February 27, 2017, Available at: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica/2017/02/27/melescanu-in-ungaria-avem-o-comunitate-confruntata-cu-probleme-foarte-reale-de-supravietuire-22-06-31>, Accessed on: January 27, 2021.

period when they were deprived of the institutions necessary to preserve their identity. Even if today they “enjoy” churches, schools, civic and political organizations, journalistic investigations in the communes inhabited by Romanians reveal the presence of a feeling of abandonment on the part of the Romanian state¹²⁵ not unlike to the one that the minority Romanians in Covasna and Harghita experience to this very day¹²⁶.

The presence of the Romanian Embassy in Budapest, the Consulates General of Romania in Gyula and Szeged, as well as the branch of the Romanian Cultural Institute in Budapest are not enough to diminish the feeling since the official organization that “represents” the interests of the community is the “Self-Government of Romanians”, structure created by the Hungarian authorities, which raises suspicions about the loyalty of leaders to their own community¹²⁷.

The feeling of abandonment of the community was reinforced by the commemoration of the Centenary of the Union celebrated in Romania (2018) because about two decades after 1920 they had no Romanian institutions, and since after 1990, according to Mrs. Maria Berényi, director of the Research Institute of Romanians in Hungary¹²⁸, the Romanian state has shown a disinterest, a disinterest on which the Hungarian authorities have imposed their own institutional structure.

Worsening the situation of the Romanian minority is the attitude of the Hungarian authorities, an attitude born out of the Trianon tragedy, which is the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the creation of the Hungarian national state. According to the findings of PhD. Alexandru Ghișa, a historian and former Romanian diplomat at the Romanian Embassy in Hungary, the Hungarian political elites in charge of Hungary blame this “tragedy” on minorities (including the Romanian one)¹²⁹.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁶ Radu Baltasiu, Gabriel Săpunaru and Ovidiana Bulumac, *Slăbirea comunității românești din Harghita-Covasna. Raport de cercetare [The weakening of the Romanian community in Harghita-Covasna. Research Report]*, Bucharest, Collection of Sociological Studies, Ethnological Publishing House, 2013.

¹²⁷ Sebastian Olaru, „Meleșcanu: În Ungaria avem o comunitate care se confruntă cu probleme reale de supraviețuire” [“Meleșcanu: In Hungary we have a community facing real problems of survival”], in *Agerpres*, February 27, 2017, Available at: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica/2017/02/27/melescanu-in-ungaria-avem-o-comunitate-confruntata-cu-probleme-foarte-reale-de-supravietuire-22-06-31>, Accessed on: January 27, 2021.

¹²⁸ Ștefan Both, „De ce românii din Ungaria nu au motive să sărbătorească Centenarul. «Această Unire pe noi ne-a lăsat în afara națiunii românești»” [“Why Romanians in Hungary have no reason to celebrate the Centenary. ‘This Union left us outside the Romanian nation’”], in *Adevărul*, December 8, 2018, Available at: https://adevarul.ro/locale/timisoara/de-romaniungaria-nu-motive-sarbatoreasca-centenarul-aceasta-unire-ne-a-lasat-afaranatiuniiromanesti1_5c0bed38df52022f754065a1/index.html, Accessed on: October 11, 2021.

¹²⁹ Alexandru Ghișa on the show Nova TV, „Ungaria trebuie ajutată să revină pe calea cea dreaptă. Cum? Prin măsuri de coerciție” [“Hungary must be helped to get back on track. How? By coercive measures”], *Nova TV*, February 7, 2024, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcshAtrSpDY>, Accessed on: February 20, 2024.

To this demonization of the Romanian community, one can add the conviction of the Hungarian authorities that by squeezing and sabotaging the existence of this community, then they will be able to obtain, through the power of example, new privileges for the Hungarian minority in Romania, the most significant advantage being the granting of autonomy on ethnic criteria for the so-called “Szeklerland”.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION AND THE ISSUE OF THE LAST TWO CENSUSES

By 2022 of the 9.603.634¹³⁰ of Hungary’s inhabitants, only 18.195 are Romanians according to Hungarian officials¹³¹, *i.e.*, 0.02%. Compared with 2011, the number of ethnic Romanians in Hungary decreased by 31%. As of 2011, they are no longer the third largest ethnic minority in Hungary, falling to sixth place after Roma, Germans, Slovaks, Ukrainians and Croats¹³².

An overview of the demographic development of the Romanian community in Hungary reveals an unusual situation: after 2001 the number of Romanians returned to the level of 1920.

- 1920: 23.695 (0.3%)
- 1930: 16.221 (0.2%)
- 1941: 14.142 (0.2%)
- 1949: 14.713 (0.2%)
- 1960: 15.787 (0.2%)
- 1970: 12.624 (0.1%)
- 1980: 10.141 (0.1%)
- 1990: 10.740 (0.1%)
- 2001: 7.995 (0.07%)¹³³
- 2011: 26.345 (0.26%)¹³⁴
- 2022: 18.195 (0.18%)¹³⁵;

The surprising demographic evolution in the post-communist period raises suspicions about the real number of Romanians in the neighbouring country. In a recent analysis, University of Oradea history professor Gabriel Moisa has shown that

¹³⁰ Hungarian Central Statistical Office, “Population by ethnic attributes, county and type of settlement. Census 2022”, s.a., Available at: <https://nepszamlalas2022.ksh.hu/en/database/#/table/WBS009/N4IgFgpghgJiBcBtEAVAogJQKoBkD6A4mgPIDMIAugDQgDOAljBAsgHJoCyAWiDSgJlc0eAAqZ->, Accessed on: May 4, 2024.

¹³¹ *Ibidem.*

¹³² *Ibidem.*

¹³³ Embassy of Romania in Hungary, „Comunitatea română din Ungaria” [“Romanian Community in Hungary”], (s.a.) Available at: <https://budapesta.mae.ro/node/797>, Accessed on: July 2nd, 2019.

¹³⁴ Numbers taken from Hungarian Central Statistical Office, “Population by ethnic attributes, county and type of settlement. Census 2022”, Available at: <https://nepszamlalas2022.ksh.hu/en/database/#/table/WBS009/N4IgFgpghgJiBcBtEAVAogJQKoBkD6A4mgPIDMIAugDQgDOAljBAsgHJoCyAWiDSgJlc0eAAqZ->, Accessed on: May 4, 2024.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem.*

the 2011 census data is erroneous because the number of Romanians in Hungary was determined by the authorities by adding up the answers to three questions in the census questionnaire. This led to the situation that although the population of Micherechi in 2011 was 2.093 inhabitants, according to the data provided by the census takers 1.637 people declared themselves Romanians and 1.799 Hungarians (*i.e.*, a total of 3.436, not 2.093). In fact, according to the estimates of the professor from Oradea, there are 7.995 Romanians in Hungary, a figure similar to that of the 2001 census¹³⁶.

Also, the 2022 census has raised questions about the validity of the data collected by the Hungarian authorities since, as in 2011, the number of Romanians in Hungary in 2022 is closer to that of 1920, which contradicts the downward trend recorded from 1920 to 2001.

The Romanian community in Hungary is distinguished by its membership of the Orthodox Christian religion. In 2011, out of 13.710 Orthodox believers in Hungary, 37% were Romanians (5.102)¹³⁷, they form the largest Orthodox community in Hungary¹³⁸, a situation found also in 2022: 22% of all Orthodox believers in the neighbouring country – 15.578¹³⁹.

EDUCATION

Compared to the Hungarian minority in Romania, the Romanian community in Hungary does not benefit from a complete structure of mother tongue education. From kindergarten to university, the Hungarian state has managed to create a private

¹³⁶ Gabriel Moisa, „Românii din Ungaria de astăzi. Cronica unui crepuscul programat (I)” [“Romanians in Hungary today. Chronicle of a programmed twilight (I)”], in *Larics*, May 30, 2022, Available at: <https://larics.ro/romanii-din-ungaria-de-astazi-cronica-unui-crepuscul-programat-i/>, Accessed on: August 30, 2022.

¹³⁷ Calculations based on data available here: Andrei Deak, „O enigmă și numeroase «bizarerii» în rezultatele finale ale Recensământului din 2011 în Ungaria!” [“An enigma and many ‘oddities’ in the final results of the 2011 Census in Hungary!”], in *Info Braşov*, July 14, 2018, Available at: <https://www.infobrasov.net/o-enigma-si-numeroase-bizarerii-in-rezultatele-finale-ale-recensamantului-din-2011-in-ungaria/>, Accessed on: October 7, 2021.

¹³⁸ Ioan Weisl, „Interviu PS Siliuan Mănuilă: Comunitatea românească din Ungaria se încăpățânează să existe” [“Interview with PS Siliuan Mănuilă: The Romanian community in Hungary is stubborn to exist”], in *Agerpres*, June 21, 2016, Available at: <https://www.agerpres.ro/social/2014/06/21/interviu-ps-siluan-manuila-comunitatea-romaneasca-din-ungaria-se-incapataneaza-sa-existe-10-37-54>, Accessed on: October 7, 2021.

¹³⁹ Numbers provided by Hungarian Central Statistical Office, “Population data by ethnic attributes, county and type of settlement. Census 2022”, Available at: https://nepszamlalas2022.ksh.hu/en/database/#/table/WBS009/N4IgFgpgghJiBcBtAugGhAZwJYwgxIAKgIIBKAYgFICiAMrQEwjoBylAsgFohqYQDGAfYwB7AHb4iASXbUA%C2%A0gAVqpKQHkAlj3QAzLABtBEAE4YEoANZYxceCHZQADsxAQxgoIgimkBJPIKKhRMFIY2IOQQgs4AblB6AK5ekgwADAxMyAC%C2%A0aARsXCEgltYIEVGx8UneBNQA4nKkqs51zfUAQgCqrXK1Ut21pN0AwoPodYpNY_W11N1k3aRdU3Lks8vkANLd5LTdHVvLmtm5RGRUdIyFxeGR0ehxclIIKTyqkM8OdIzQA===, Accessed on: May 4, 2024.

Hungarian language education structure in Romania with its own funds¹⁴⁰. Since neither the Romanian State nor other institutions or private organizations didn't endeavor to understand and find remedies that might help the Romanian community in Hungary, the situation of one of the main institutions preserving the Romanian identity in Hungary – the school – is as follows.

In 2017, Romanians in Hungary could learn in their own language in 25 schools¹⁴¹. As for the lower cycle of study, Romanian children had access to Romanian kindergartens in nine localities¹⁴². In 2021, the construction of a kindergarten-nursery started in Micherechi (Mehkerek). The project has a value of 315.000 Euro and was financed by the County Council of Bichiș (Békés)¹⁴³.

At the next level of education, Romanian children have the opportunity to learn in their own language in 12 general schools, seven of which are bilingual (Romanian-Hungarian)¹⁴⁴, and in five Romanian is taught only as a subject of study¹⁴⁵. As far as the high school level is concerned, the situation is less favourable for the community: there is only one Romanian high school – “Nicolae Bălcescu” High School in Jula (Gyula)¹⁴⁶.

Romanians in Hungary do not receive higher education in their mother tongue, except mother-tongue teacher training programmes at ELTE University (Budapest), the Pedagogical Faculty “Juhász Gyula” of the University of Seghedin and the Pedagogical Faculty of the University of St. Stephen, Szarvas¹⁴⁷.

Despite the lack of an education system in the mother tongue, almost half of the ethnic Romanians manage to graduate from high school or attend a university even though most of them do not do so in their mother tongue, the only Romanian

¹⁴⁰ Radu Ursan, „Secretar de Stat al Guvernului Orban: În Transilvania a fost creată o structură completă de învățământ în limba maghiară” [“State Secretary of the Orban Government: A complete structure of Hungarian-language education has been created in Transylvania”], in *R3media*, June 6, 2022, Available at: <https://r3media.ro/secretar-de-stat-al-guvernului-orban-in-transilvania-a-fost-creata-o-structura-completa-de-invatamant-in-limba-maghiara/>, Accessed on: July 17, 2022.

¹⁴¹ Virtual Library of Romanians in Hungary, „Instituții de învățământ românesc în Ungaria” [“Romanian educational institutions in Hungary”], Available at: <https://bibliotecaromaneasca-hu.ro/institutiile-de-invatamant-romanesec-in-ungaria/>, Accessed on: October 7, 2021.

¹⁴² These localities are: Aletea, Apateu, Batania, Bedeu, Cenadul Unguresc, Chitighaz, Jula, Micherechi, Sacal, in *Ibidem*.

¹⁴³ Gheorghe Miron, „Consulul României la Gyula, Florin Vasiloni, a inaugurat nouă creșă pentru copiii românilor din Micherechi Ungaria” [“The Romanian Consul in Gyula, Florin Vasiloni, inaugurated a new nursery for Romanian children in Micherechi Hungary”], in *Ziua de Vest*, May 26, 2021, Available at: <https://www.ziuainvest.ro/consulul-romaniei-la-gyula-florin-vasiloni-ainauguratnouacresa-pentru-copiiromani-din-micherechi-ungaria/>, Accessed on: October 7, 2021.

¹⁴⁴ These schools are located in Aletea, Batania, Bedeu, Chitighaz, Jula, Micherechi, Sacal, in Virtual Library of Romanians in Hungary, „Instituții de învățământ românesc în Ungaria” [“Romanian educational institutions in Hungary”], Available at: <https://bibliotecaromaneasca-hu.ro/institutiile-de-invatamant-romanesec-inungaria/>, Accessed on: October 7, 2021.

¹⁴⁵ Namely in the localities Apateu, Cenadul Unguresc, Furta, Leucușhaz, Poci, in *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

high school being in Jula (Gyula). By the year 2022, the Romanian community in Hungary will look like this, depending on the levels of education graduated:

- 28%: graduated from high school;
- 22%: graduated from secondary school;
- 19%: have graduated from high school incomplete;
- 19%: have completed higher education;
- 4%: have completed primary school¹⁴⁸.

MASS-MEDIA

If the Romanian state grants ethnic Hungarians 48 hours per week for TV broadcasts in their mother tongue by 2023¹⁴⁹, the Hungarian state offered Romanians in Hungary only 52 minutes. This means that they have access to a TV program in their mother tongue twice a week. The programme is called “Our Screen” (26 minutes) and is broadcast on TV channel “m1” and “Duna TV”, both belonging to the Hungarian Public Broadcasting Trust¹⁵⁰. Romanians have also reported since 2015 that they do not have access to private TV channels in Romania¹⁵¹ and between 2010 and 2015 access was conditional on Romanian citizenship, which was difficult to obtain¹⁵².

The press of ethnic Hungarians in Romania is sponsored with approx. 6.1 million euros annually (from the Hungarian government alone, not counting the UDMR)¹⁵³, while the press of Romanians in Hungary is financed with only 120.000 euros from the Hungarian government (situation encountered in 2018)¹⁵⁴. Since

¹⁴⁸ Own calculations based on data provided by Hungarian Central Statistical Office, “Population data by ethnic attributes, county and type of settlement. Census 2022”, Available at: <https://nepszamlalas2022.ksh.hu/en/database/#/table/WBS009>, Accessed on: May 4, 2024.

¹⁴⁹ According to the analysis of the TVR programme schedule for the week of February 27, and March 5, 2023. The grid can be consulted at the following internet address: http://www.tvr.ro/program.html?channel_1=tvrtimisoara.

¹⁵⁰ Embassy of Romania in Hungary, „Comunitatea română din Ungaria” [“Romanian Community in Hungary”], (s.a.) Available at: <https://budapesta.mae.ro/node/797>, Accessed on: July 2nd, 2019.

¹⁵¹ Antena 3 CNN, „Ungaria interzice canalele tv românești pentru românii din Ungaria” [“Hungary bans Romanian TV channels for Romanians in Hungary”], in *Antena 3 CNN*, November 20, 2015, Available at: <https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/ungaria-interzice-canalele-tv-romanesti-pentru-romanii-din-ungaria-325536.html>, Accessed on: May 18, 2024.

¹⁵² Gazeta de Cluj, „Mii de români din Ungaria vor cetățenie română pentru abonamentul de cablu TV” [“Thousands of Romanians in Hungary want Romanian citizenship for cable TV subscription”], March 22, 2011, Available at: <https://gazetadecluj.ro/mii-deromanidinungariavorcetatenie-romana-pentru-abonamentul-de-cablu-tv/>, Accessed on: May 18, 2024.

¹⁵³ Sipos Zoltan, „Punguța cu doi bani: 5 milioane de euro pe an pentru trustul media maghiar din Transilvania” [“The two-bit bag: 5 million euros a year for the Hungarian media trust in Transylvania”], in *Átlászó Erdély*, July 28, 2021, Available at: <https://atlatsz.ro/ro/important/punguta-cu-doi-bani-5-milioane-de-euro-pe-an-pentru-trustul-media-maghiar-din-transilvania/>, Accessed on: October 6, 2021.

¹⁵⁴ Info Brașov, „Românilor din Ungaria le merge «excelent»” [“Romanians in Hungary are doing ‘excellent’”], December 2nd, 2018, Available at: <https://www.infobrasov.net/romanilor-din-ungaria-le-merge-excelent-trage-sa-moara-si-publicatia-lor-de-suflet-foaia-romaneasca>, Accessed on: January 14, 2021.

2024, the Romanian State, through the Department of Romanians Abroad, has granted financial support to the newspaper “Foaia Românească”¹⁵⁵. Just in one year, based on the data we have, we observe that the (partial) funding of the Hungarian press in Romania is 50 times higher than the (total) funding of the Romanian press in Hungary.

The funding for the local minority press, which is a fixed amount (120.000 euros annually), is shared by the newspapers “Foaia Românească” and “Cronica”, a newspaper set up by the Romanian Self-Government. Instead of doubling the funds, the Budapest authorities decided to split the amount in two, reducing the income of the two magazines¹⁵⁶.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE-LEGAL ISSUES

While ethnic Hungarians occupied more than 37.000 seats between 1990 and 2021¹⁵⁷ in the state administration, Romanians in Hungary are not represented by any political party in the Hungarian Parliament¹⁵⁸. Moreover, minority representatives do not have the right to vote in Parliament (they only have a consultative role)¹⁵⁹.

The Romanian minority is represented in the Hungarian Parliament by a spokesman, in the person of Traian Cresta, on behalf of the Self-Government of Romanians in Hungary, who does not have the right to vote and who, as the director of the Romanian Leaf in Hungary, Eva Iova Șimon, or the history professor Gabriel Moisa from Oradea claim, is affiliated to the interests of Budapest and not to the Romanian community¹⁶⁰.

¹⁵⁵ See the first and second issue of the newspaper “Foaia românească” from 2024, Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=960685518970838&set=pcb.960686362304087>, Accessed on: May 18, 2024.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁷ Personal statistics, based on data available here:

1. DW, „Cine sunt europarlamentarii pe care Romania ii trimite la Bruxelles” [“Who are the MEPs that Romania sends to Brussels”], May 28, 2019, Available at: <https://www.dw.com/ro/cine-sunt-europarlamentarii-pe-care-romania-ii-trimite-la-bruxelles/a-48938092>, Accessed on: July 17, 2022.

2. Cosmin Pirv, „Coaliția de guvernare și-a împărțit prefecturile. Care sunt ponderile care revin fiecărui partid aflat la conducere” [“The governing coalition has divided its prefectures. What are the weights for each ruling party”], in *Mediafax*, January 12, 2021, Available at: <https://www.mediafax.ro/politic/coalitia-de-guvernare-si-a-impartit-prefecturile-care-sunt-ponderile-care-revin-fiecarui-partid-aflat-la-conducere19862222>, Accessed on: July 17, 2022.

¹⁵⁸ Nicu Stan, „Vești proaste pentru românii din Ungaria. Totul este cât se poate de clar” [“Bad news for Romanians in Hungary. Everything is as clear as can be”], in *Playtech*, May 18, 2020, Available at: <https://playtech.ro/stiri/vesti-proaste-pentru-romanii-din-ungaria-totul-este-cat-se-poate-de-clar-127269>, Accessed on: January 27, 2021.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁰ Gabriel Moisa, „Oamenii Budapestei din frunte... românilor. Românii din Ungaria de astăzi sau cronică unui crepuscul programat (II)” [“The people of Budapest at the head of... Romanians. Today’s Romanians in Hungary or the chronicle of a programmed twilight (II)”], in *Larics*, June 2nd, 2022, Available at: <https://larics.ro/oamenii-budapestei-din-fruntea-romanilor-romanii-din-ungaria-de-astazi-sau-cronica-unui-crepuscul-programat-ii/>, Accessed on: August 30, 2022.

Hungarians in Romania can obtain dual citizenship faster than Romanians in Hungary. The process was simplified by the Hungarian authorities after 2011. In just six years, more than 515.000 Hungarians with dual citizenship have been registered in Romania¹⁶¹.

Moreover, in recent years, Romanians in Hungary are facing what specialists in the field have called the phenomenon of “ethno-business”. This means that some Hungarian citizens, with the tacit support of the state, declare themselves to be Romanians without actually belonging, ethnically or culturally, to the Romanian minority in Hungary, in order to benefit from the funds intended for Romanian self-governments. This has even led to a situation where the Country Self-Governments (which are the official bodies of the Romanians that are supposed to represent their interests before the Hungarian state) are run by people loyal to Budapest and not to the Romanian national cause¹⁶².

Romanians in Hungary are not and cannot be represented in Parliament by an organization such as the UDMR in Romania. The latter actively participates in the Romanian government and has even had presidential candidates. It should be noted that in the Hungarian Parliament representatives of minorities do not have the right to vote, but only a consultative role¹⁶³.

Even though the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania is not a political party, but a political organization, founded to represent the interests of the Hungarian community, the results obtained in the elections held in Romania from 1990 to date have not exceeded 8%, it is the political party that has been the longest governing party in Romania in the post-December period, more precisely between December 1996 and 2023¹⁶⁴.

The legal status of Romanians in Hungary is that of a national minority. In Hungarian law, there are two types of minorities: national and ethnic. The former, of which there are 13, have a mother state while ethnic minorities (*e.g.*, Gypsies/Roma) do not have a mother state¹⁶⁵.

¹⁶¹ Bianca Felseghi, „Dublul mesaj al lui Viktor Orbán pentru maghiarii cu dublă cetățenie din România” [“Viktor Orbán’s double message for dual Hungarians in Romania”], in *PressOne*, July 26, 2017, Available at: <https://pressone.ro/dublul-mesaj-al-lui-viktor-orban-pentru-maghiarii-cu-dubla-cetatenie-din-romania>, Accessed on: August 16, 2022.

¹⁶² Gabriel Moisa, „Oamenii Budapestei din fruntea... românilor. Românii din Ungaria de astăzi sau cronică unui crepuscul programat (II)” [“The people of Budapest on the... Romanians. Romanians in Hungary today or the chronicle of a programmed twilight (II)”], in *Larics*, June 2nd, 2022, Available at: <https://larics.ro/oamenii-budapestei-din-fruntea-romanilor-romanii-din-ungaria-de-astazi-sau-cronica-unui-crepuscul-programat-ii/>, Accessed on: August 30, 2022.

¹⁶³ Nicu Stan, „Vestii proaste pentru românii din Ungaria. Totul este cât se poate de clar” [“Bad news for Romanians in Hungary. Everything is as clear as can be”], in *Playtech*, May 18, 2020, Available at: <https://playtech.ro/stiri/vesti-proaste-pentru-romanii-din-ungaria-totul-este-cat-se-poate-de-clar-127269>, Accessed on: January 27, 2021.

¹⁶⁴ Bianca Ion, „Ce variante de guvernare ar exista după ultimul sondaj publicat de Politico” [“What the options for government would be according to the latest poll published by Politico”], in *Ziare*, August 21, 2021, Available at: <https://ziare.com/florin-citu/stiri-florin-citu/variante-guvernare-analiza-politico-1695770>, Accessed on: December 14, 2023.

¹⁶⁵ Alexandru Ghișa on the show Nova TV, „Ungaria trebuie ajutată să revină pe calea cea dreaptă. Cum? Prin măsuri de coerciție” [“Hungary must be helped to get back on track. How? By

According to Ph.D. Alexandru Ghișa, historian and former diplomat at the Romanian Embassy in Hungary, through such a legal classification the Hungarian government encourages the movement of territorial autonomy of the Hungarians in Romania. It is trying to obtain a similar status for Hungarians in Romania, which would make it possible, as in the case of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to obtain territorial autonomy. Minorities in the former republic were constituent parts of the state, and when it broke up they were able to establish their own nation states¹⁶⁶.

SOLUTIONS FOR MAINTAINING COMMUNITY VITALITY

The Romanians in Hungary went from the ideal-typical state of a vital community that succeeded in starting the national revival movement in Transylvania to one abandoned to the permanent onslaught of its host state. Without the revitalization of the community through the intervention of the Romanian state, the will of the community will gradually be replaced by that of the Hungarian state, a process that has already begun. Revitalization will not be possible without the adoption of the following solutions:

1. Replacement of the community representative body (ATRU) and support for organisations not affiliated to Budapest's interests;
2. Creation of private secondary and higher education structures;
3. Connecting the community to Romanian radio and TV stations;
4. Making the dual citizenship process more efficient;
5. Support of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Hungary.

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¹⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

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