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Minority Research Journals in Slovakia and Hungary

It is hardly debatable that in the decades since the regime change, significant institutionalization has taken place in the Central European genre of ethnic studies, particularly in the field of minority research. Numerous academic, governmental, and university institutes, as well as research centers established by the affected communities, have started their operations. Most of them seek to adapt to the conditions of international project financing, which, partly in a fortunate manner, encourage cooperation and the exploration of new subject areas. In part, this process has also had some undesirable consequences, pushing longitudinal research and time series analysis into the background. All of this continuously has shaped and transformed the institutions dealing with Central European ethnic processes, a transformation that can be readily traced in the emergence, disappearance, and migration to the internet of the associated specialist journals.

Among the Hungarian-language minority-focused journals, *Kisebbségkutatás* (*Minority Research*) edited by Győző Cholnoky, recently ceased publication after a 27-year run between 1991 and 2018. The issues from 1997 to 2018 are freely accessible via the popular Hungarian journal database MATARKA. The second and third volumes of *Magyar Kisebbség* (*Hungarian Minority*), published by a foundation in Cluj-Napoca and substantial in documentation, databases, and thematic compilations, also appear to have—hopefully only temporarily—stalled. From the older journals published in Hungary, the *Regio: kisebbség, társadalom, politika* (*Regio: minority, society, politics*), founded by László Tóth in 1990, still appears regularly, and it has been published and cared for by the Institute for Minority Studies for the past two decades. The journal's past issues are available on the Electronic Periodical Database (www.epa.hu). Similarly, digital issues of *Pro Minoritate* journal published since 1991 are available on the website of the foundation with the same name.

Considered a joint cultural journal of Hungary's minorities, *Barátság* (*Friendship*) used to be a monthly publication and is now issued six times a year. Featuring well-designed, high-quality visual artwork, the journal defines itself as a "cultural and public

affairs journal that serves the mutual understanding of the peoples of Hungary.” The issues of this periodical, now in its 30th volume, are available on the *Nemzetiségek* (*Nationalities*) portal (<http://nemzetisegek.hu/>), which continuously offers rich informational material.

Kisebbségi Szemle (Minority Review)

Among the minority journals in Hungary, one of the latest and relatively less-known ones is the *Kisebbségi Szemle*, led by Zoltán Kántor from the Institute for National Policy Research. The journal has been published since 2016, and its digital versions are available for free download on the website of the Bethlen Gábor Foundation: (<https://bgazrt.hu/nemzetpolitikai-kutatointezet/folyoiratok/kisebbségi-szemle/>).

To pique your interest, we would like to draw your attention to two studies from 2022 Issues 3 and 4. Tamás Szabó, an Assistant Professor in political science at Sapientia Hungarian University in Transylvania, examines the foreign policy activities of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség, RMDSZ) in his two-part study titled “The Foreign Policy Advocacy of Ethnic Parties”. In the first part published in issue 2022, number 3, the author outlines the theoretical framework of the analysis. He emphasizes that, much like Bulgarian Turkish parties and Hungarian parties in Slovakia and Serbia, the RMDSZ had to grapple with the question of how its foreign policy maneuverability was fundamentally shaped by participation in the government over one or two electoral cycles. This position entailed institutionalized coalition partnership and discipline, while also bringing forth a greater initiative potential derived from the party’s opposition role. During the RMDSZ’s first period of participation in government from 1996 to 2012, the successful NATO accession and European integration represented common foreign policy priorities with the majority partners, much like the Hungarian Coalition in Slovakia during its participation in the two governments of Mikuláš Dzurinda.

In the second part of his study published in *Kisebbségi Szemle*’s 2022/4 issue, Tamás Szabó reviews the international repercussions of the status law adopted by the Hungarian National Assembly in 2001 and the RMDSZ’s role as a mediator and balancer in the bilateral and international disputes. Following Romania’s EU accession on January 1, 2007, the author notes significant steps taken by the RMDSZ during the “Europeanized foreign policy” era. However, once the alliance went into opposition from 2012 and temporarily lost its role of balance in the Romanian party system, a noticeable turnaround occurred in the foreign policy activities of the Transylvanian Hungarian party. Alongside the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), the RMDSZ played a significant, even leading role in the Minority SafePack Initiative (MSPI) launched as a European citizens’ initiative in 2013. After MSPI collected more than 1,000,000 valid signatures in at least seven EU member states by April 3, 2018, a legislative proposal

by MSPI was submitted to the new committee formed after the European Parliament elections on January 10, 2020. The proposal was presented to the European Commission on February 5, 2020. The MSPI encountered significant government resistance in Romania and Slovakia, highlighting the fact that the foreign policy maneuverability of ethnic parties can trigger significant counter-reactions throughout.

Under the banner of “Europeanized foreign policy,” the RMDSZ produced a shadow report on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages adopted by the Council of Europe. The RMDSZ drew the attention of the U.S. government to severe infringements affecting the Hungarian community in Transylvania, such as injustices in the restitution of historical church community assets.

Tamás Szabó’s study makes several important conclusions, which seem applicable to other Hungarian minority parties as well. In particular, the following statement is worth quoting: “The ethnic parties’ involvement in foreign policies has been promoted by both internal and external factors. While, at the domestic political level, the limits of cooperation with the majority and the marginalized position resulting from the opposition role brought strategies for representing minority interests in foreign affairs to the forefront, at the international level, interconnected processes (such as the more prominent role of kin states [or motherlands]), transnationalization of politics, internationalization of minority issues, and European integration) have significantly facilitated the formation of coalitions and the organization of ethnic parties into transnational networks.”

From the rich content of the 2022/4 issue, it is important to draw attention to Norbert Tóth’s well-documented and significant study on the commitments made by the Visegrád Four (V4) countries regarding the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The author, an associate professor and department head at the Ludovika University of Public Service, offers an excellent overview of the commitments made by the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary concerning the 98 legal norms outlined in the charter.

As European linguistic diversity, unfortunately, is visibly reflected in language rights as well, it had to be stipulated at the time of the charter’s release that contracting states were not obliged to accept and recognize every provision. Among the V4 states, Poland has assumed just 37 commitments, yet it endeavors to apply them to 19 languages used within its territory. In contrast, the Czech Republic has pledged 48 provisions, primarily related to two minority languages: Polish and Slovak. Slovakia regards 53 commitments of the charter as mandatory, while Hungary has 57 legal obligations. Moreover, within these countries, not all rights are provided to every minority in their territories. The author thoroughly presents the commitments made in the fields of education, justice, public administration, media, and culture. Although the four countries committed to 81 out of 98 legal obligations, only 20 of these legal norms are obligatory

for all V4 member states. It goes without saying how important it would be to monitor the results of regular European Commission inspections and, even more so, to collect compliance with the commitments in local shadow reports.

The same issue of the *Kisebbségi Szemle* contains, among other contributions, a historiographical overview by Ildikó Bajcsi, a researcher at the Clio Institute, on the interpretations of Trianon in Slovak historiography. The author concludes, among other things, that rather than focusing on political history analyses, there is potential for creating a complementary historical overview through studies, books, and research in the fields of social and cultural history, as well as investigations “from the perspective of memory politics.”

Minority policy in Slovakia. Critical Magazine

Regarding the state of minority journals in Slovakia, besides the journal of the Forum Institute in Šamorín, we find primarily regular scientific studies on minority topics in the *Slezský sborník* published by the Silesian Museum in Opava and the *Človek a spoločnosť* (ČaS) journal of the Slovak Academy of Sciences' Institute of Social Sciences in Košice. The latter journal, titled *Individual and Society*, has been published in English since 2018 (<https://individualandsociety.org/>).

In the following, we present the *Menšinová politika na Slovensku. Kritický magazín*, first published between 2011 and 2014 and reintroduced in 2020, available in both Slovak and English. It is published by the Center for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (*Centrum pre výskum etnicity a kultúry*; CVEK), a non-governmental, independent social association based in Bratislava. The journal, under the leadership of project manager Alena Holka Chudžíková and editor Elena Gallová Kriglerová, is published online twice a year and is accessible on the journal's website (<https://mensinovapolitika.eu>).

In the first issue of 2022, released in late February (<https://mensinovapolitika.eu/2022/02/>), four studies are available in both Slovak and English. Kriglerová analyzes the possibilities, obstacles, and risks associated with the mass influx of Ukrainian refugees into Slovakia that is expected to occur with the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war. According to data from 2022, since the beginning of the war in 2014, over 56,000 Ukrainian citizens have applied for a temporary or permanent residence permit in Slovakia. The author quotes Interior Minister Mikulec, stating that, if necessary, Slovakia could provide accommodation for tens of thousands more refugees. Kriglerová also highlights the results of research on the Slovak population's opinion regarding migration. Research revealed that in 2022, 85% of the Slovak public considered the prevention and control of mass migration to be important, largely due to the impact of the 2015–2016 Syrian and Afghan refugee waves. However, it is worth noting

that the willingness to accept Ukrainian war refugees in January 2022 was significantly higher than the general sentiment expressed in the 2022 research.

The study's conclusion draws attention to the fact that, despite changes to immigration laws, Slovakia lacks an effective system for integrating refugees and immigrants settling in the country on a long-term basis. The CVEK's research program for 2020–2021 also examined the topic of foreigner integration in Slovakia. The results of this program are summarized by Michaela Pířová, who highlights the common phenomenon of rejection due to the lack of personal relationships with Slovaks and knowledge of the Slovak language. Those immigrants settling in Slovakia face substantial challenges when attempting to communicate in English with the majority of the Slovak population and various institutions. Dark-skinned immigrants often experience prejudice from the majority population. Nevertheless, foreign nationals who have established permanent residency in Slovakia hold very positive views about the country's security and the freedom to practice their own religious and cultural identities.

In her brief analysis of the 2021 census ethnic and language data, Alena Holka Chudžíková highlights three noteworthy phenomena. First and foremost, the author underscores the possibility of multiple ethnic identities. Thanks to the option of dual declaration, the decline in the number of individuals identifying primarily as Hungarian was effectively halted. This is attributed to the 34,098 individuals who identify themselves as Hungarian alongside other identities. As a result, the number of ethnic Hungarians decreased by a modest 2,313 individuals, which is significantly less compared to the decline of hundreds of thousands in the preceding 20 years. At the same time, the number of those identifying as Rusyn nearly doubled between 2011 and 2021, increasing from 33,482 to 63,556, even though only a minority of them (23,746 individuals) listed Rusyn as their primary ethnicity. Dual ethnic identity has been a long-standing characteristic of the Roma population in Slovakia, and this method may represent a positive development for them as well. In 2011, 105,738 individuals identified as Roma, whereas in 2021, this number rose to 156,164. Nevertheless, only 67,179 individuals listed Roma as their primary ethnic affiliation. Additionally, the willingness to acknowledge ethnic heritage was evident in the data pertaining to 8,538 ethnic Germans and 1,838 Jewish Slovak citizens. In both cases, the majority did not list German or Jewish as their primary ethnicity.

The latest issue of the journal, published in 2022 as Issue 2, presents two studies that delve into the impact of radical and extremist tendencies permeating youth in Slovakia. Jana Kadlečíková underlines the fact that authorities and social organizations dealing with this matter tend to respond reactively, often only after conflicts have already erupted. Their efforts consistently lack preventive measures, educational tools, and interventions. Research conducted by CVEK last year also indicated that schools bear the brunt of this responsibility, despite being already overwhelmed with numerous other tasks. Additionally, support and guidance for extracurricular activities among

young people, except for various sports, appear to be rather limited. It appears that the government sector is struggling with uncertainty, while municipalities and social organizations are, for the most part, ill-prepared for such preventive endeavors. It would be undoubtedly crucial to conduct separate research focused on analyzing youth within the two largest minority communities in Slovakia.

Alena Holka Chudžíková presents the findings of a program that investigated the dynamics and potential collaboration between the Slovak police and young individuals. According to data gathered through focus group interviews, young people also recognize the significance of the police presence in preventing and addressing extremist phenomena. However, their interpretation of democracy frequently extends beyond the boundaries accepted by state authorities. This reality, combined with the prevailing lack of trust in these authorities, unquestionably leads to the author's concluding observation that the majority of teenagers do not closely heed the official warnings and notifications from law enforcement agencies.

The journal presents a compelling interview conducted by Svetluša Surová, an expert in European minority self-governance and a member of the Slovak community in Vojvodina. In this interview, she engages with Professor David Smith, who is the Alec Nove chair in Russian and East European Studies at the University of Glasgow and serves as the editor-in-chief of the journal *Europe-Asia Studies*. Furthermore, Professor Smith is a member of the Council for European Studies and undertakes editorial responsibilities for the council's exceptionally captivating and high-quality journal, *Europe Now* (<https://www.europenowjournal.org/issues/past-issues/>).

Surová, in a previous issue of *Menšinová politika*, explored the concept of national councils responsible for minority cultural autonomies, a significant but neglected addition to the minority legislation draft led by the Plenipotentiary for Minorities László Bukovszky. In her interview with the British professor, she also raised questions about the potential for institutionalizing the communal rights of minorities. One of the research projects conducted by Professor Smith of University of Glasgow involved a comparison of minority models in various European countries. Based on this research, he shared the view that the effective provision of collective rights for minority communities becomes most successful when these communities form integrated groups within the societal, economic, and political lives of the respective country. Even in such cases, individual-based cultural self-governance solutions seem to be more successful than territorial autonomies. While these solutions are essential political institutions, they are less likely to be accused of endangering the political and territorial integrity of the country. However, for non-integrated or partially integrated, marginalized, and discriminated minority groups, cultural autonomy may not be a feasible path, as their situation requires solutions to many other fundamental issues that cultural self-governance institutions are not suitable for. David Smith illustrates this contradiction through the example of the cultural self-governance of the German and Roma minorities in

Hungary: while the former successfully organizes and oversees the strengthening of German minority education, the local, regional, and national Roma cultural self-governance bodies consistently face serious problems in all aspects of community life.

In the era of online portal dominance, a pressing question emerges: how can traditional print and digital journals, known for their commitment to scientific rigor and methodology, secure their future? The wealth of content featured in the Hungarian and Slovak minority reviews discussed above serves as a clear indicator. Within the often disorderly and unfiltered landscape of online platforms, marked by the absence of essential academic references, the fields dedicated to the study of minority issues will persistently demand, and should wholeheartedly welcome, the provision of rigorously substantiated, verifiable information and findings offered by scholarly journals for a considerable time.