

Reports on the Situation of Hungarians Living Abroad

Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad

Hungarians in Austria 2002

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Dear Reader,

You are holding in your hands the third edition of the regional reports launched in summer 2000 on the situation of the Hungarian communities abroad, supplemented with the most important events and data of the year 2001 and in some respects of the present year 2002.

From the viewpoint of the Hungarians living abroad, the most important event of the first year of the third millennium – of which the major events and data are contained in this new edition – was Law LXII/2001 about Hungarians living in neighbouring countries. The law was passed by the Hungarian Parliament on 19 June 2001 with a 93 percent majority, a fact without precedent in recent years' practice. The passage of the law gave concrete substance to the country's responsibility toward Hungarians abroad, a principle also embodied in Hungary's Constitution.

As it is known, Hungarians abroad are granted on the basis of the law extra rights in the fields of education, culture, employment, and social and health care. As the various Hungarian communities abroad can represent the totality of their values only by remaining in their native land, at the same time an important objective of the law is to provide assistance and benefits that can be put to good use in the beneficiaries' land of birth,. These include among other things the promotion of Hungarian-language education in neighbouring countries by providing school equipment and materials for instruction and education.

An important objective of the law, therefore, is to slow down emigration to Hungary. This will be of particular importance in the years and decades ahead because it is quite likely that as Hungary moves more and more from the anteroom where it is now into the European Union, the spontaneous inclination of the Hungarians abroad to emigrate will continue to grow. Already in the past ten years several hundred thousand ethnic Hungarians have emigrated to Hungary and to the West. Thus the law is an instrument to put a brake on this propensity to emigrate.

In the process of the drafting of the law, Hungary has continuously harmonized its moves with the European Union. At the 8 October 2001 meeting of the EU-Hungary Parliamentary Mixed Committee, the Legal Service of the European Parliament made public its report about the law on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries. The document states that the law does not conflict with the association treaty signed between Hungary and the European Union. Therefore Hungary has the right, while observing the association treaty, to provide certain benefits to citizens originating from non-EU countries.

Thus the philosophy of the law dealing with Hungarians living in neighbouring countries is fully in harmony with the norms of integrative organizations. Its main objective is to promote the preservation of the identity and culture of the Hungarian communities abroad, and to contribute in this manner to the maintenance and development of Europe's cultural and national diversity.

Hungarian politicians firmly trust that the essence of the law and the true substance behind it will be understood by a growing number of people, among them also those and precisely those who are really pondering how the future Europe and the coexistence of the existing communities – not only of states but also of local, regional, cultural, national, and religious communities which will constitute the true fabric of the future Europe – should be like. The work of the recently established European Convention, in which Hungary has through its representatives the possibility to participate in the discourse about the future Europe, offers an excellent opportunity for this common thinking.

These processes hold out the promise that the Europe of the future will be more united, stronger, more democratic and closer to the citizens than the present one. A Europe in which the notion and importance of absolute territoriality will fade away while at the same time the units above the state and the smaller ones below the state will become stronger. This will resolve the old dilemma of having to choose between the „nations of Europe” or the „Europe above nations” because the Europe of the 21st century will be a „community of communities.”

The concept of the law is in accordance with the concept of the future Europe. With it, Hungary and the entire Hungarian ethnic community have declared that they want to promote the building of a united, common and multicoloured Europe of the future. A Europe of which one of the most important supporting pillars will be the preservation and consolidation of historical, linguistic and cultural identity, of diversity and of the European culture that encompasses all these values.

*Tibor Szabó
Chairman*

The Situation of Hungarians in Austria

Currently, some 50,000 to 70,000 Hungarians live in the Republic of Austria (according to the 1991 national census, the exact number is 33,459 based on the language used). They can be divided into two main groups regarding origin. The indigenous Hungarian community of Burgenland was brought under Austrian jurisdiction as a consequence of the Trianon Peace Treaty at the close of World War I along with the Sopron regional referendum and border adjustment, both of which were measures taken to correct the territorial provisions of the peace treaty. The second group consists of refugees and immigrants who settled down during the course of various time periods, residing primarily in Vienna and the surrounding areas as well as in the provincial centres of Austria.

1. THE HUNGARIAN IMMIGRANTS

Hungarians can actually be found in a continuous manner in Austria from the times after the battle of Mohács (1526), primarily in Vienna and its surroundings, but later (with Péter Pázmány at their head) also in Graz.

According to the 1910 census, there were 215,390 Hungarians residing in Lower Austria, of whom 10,399 were Csángos from Bukovina. 139,300 Hungarian citizens (or 71.3% of the total) resided in Vienna alone. Following the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the number of the Hungarians decreased considerably. In August 1919 those fleeing the Red terror were replaced by the refugees of Hungary's Soviet Republic. A large number of political and economic refugees arrived in Austria in 1944–45 and again after the crushing of the 1956 Revolution. One should not leave unmentioned the steady flow from the 1960s on, of Hungarian „economic refugees” to Austria, and the thousands of ethnic Hungarians from Yugoslavia and Romania who arrived in the 1980s and were granted right of asylum in Austria.

The World War II refugees – Hungarian military personnel and civilians – found refuge mainly in the provinces occupied by the Western powers. From the beginning of the 1950s on, the majority of the refugees moved overseas.

Emigrants of 1944–45 were able to engage in various organizational activities most freely in the French-occupied territories. Innsbruck became the centre of such activities, most notably those of the former members of the military led by Generals Ferenc Farkas Kisbarnaki and András Zákó. Lieutenant-Colonel Ferenc Adonyi-Naredy was the leading figure of similar activities in the English zone in Carinthia. In 1947, the *Community of Fellow Soldiers* was formed which, on October 23 1948, was renamed the *Community of Hungarian Fighters*

at the suggestion of General Zákó.

In 1947, the *Table Society of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie* was established in Graz, which after 1949 continued its activities as the *Community of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie*. A significant number of the Community members later settled overseas. The *Christiana Hungaria* — Association of Hungarian Christians established in 1949, with its centre also in Graz, remained in existence until the 1990s.

Advocating legal continuity, emigrants who were previously members of the 1939 Parliament and other political factors established the *Legislators' Group Based on the Hungarian Historic Constitution*, later called the *Union*. The so-called moderate 39-ers formed the forefront of the group under the leadership of Count Béla Teleki, former President of the Transylvanian Party, of Count József Pálffy and of Lajos Máriaffi. Miklós Bonczos, former minister of the interior of the Lakatos Cabinet, established the *Hungarian Service*, an organization with a social program. These along with other organizations with similar programs formed the *National Anti-Bolshevik Force*, which in spite of its aspirations was not able to achieve the role of a top body.

It must be noted that these organizations of a political character and with restricted memberships did not play any particular role in the life of the Hungarians in Austria. Furthermore, after 1955 – in view of Austria's neutrality – the functioning of political refugee organizations was outright prohibited.

Following the 1956 Revolution, 181,000 Hungarian refugees arrived in Austria. By 1959, 162,000 of them had moved to other Western countries and 7,772 had returned to Hungary. On that occasion, Austria, like Switzerland, took in refugees far beyond its capacity, which is admirable even if other Western countries also did their share in providing aid to these refugees. The care of the Hungarian refugees was directed and coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior as next to Austrian aid organizations (for example Caritas) and the Austrian Red Cross, Forumhilfe and Volkshilfe, religious and lay aid organizations from various states alongside the International Red Cross joined forces in taking care of the refugees. One should note in particular the opening by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees of a separate office in Vienna.

Among the Hungarian aid organizations operating in Austria at the time, one must primarily mention *First Aid for Hungary* (whose delegate in Austria was Lieutenant-General Béla Lengyel), *Free Europe Citizen Service*, and *Hungarian Refugee Service* in which László Taubinger distinguished himself. Next to giving financial support, these organizations also provided information and administrative assistance to the refugees.

At the end of 1956, the World Federation of Political Refugees, later known as the Federation of Hungarian Political Prisoners, was founded in Vienna. At the beginning of 1957, the Hungarian Freedom Fighters (National Guard) Society, headed by General Béla Király, was established, and later renamed the Hungarian Freedom Society. These clearly politically oriented organizations hardly played any role in community life and were relatively short-lived as a great many of their members left neutral Austria. A much more important role was played by the successor of the Federation of University and College Associations (MEFESZ), the Federation of Free Hungarian Students set up in Austria's university towns, whose organizations in Graz and Innsbruck are still functioning. One should not forget that between 1957 and 1959, the Hungarian university and college students in Austria numbered over 1,000. Later, new organizations joined the existing ones. From a religious point of view, the establishment alongside Catholic and Protestant rectorships in every provincial capital in addition to those in Vienna and Kismarton (Eisenstadt) was of particular importance. In the first decades of emigration, they were the ones that brought together the largest number of Hungarians.

From the end of the 1970s, there was also a change in the character of emigré activities in Austria. Next to their direct political nature, these organizations increasingly emphasized the preservation of culture and ethnic identity.

Presently, the *Central Federation of Hungarian Associations and Organizations in Austria (Zentralverband)*, established in 1980, is the top body of Hungarian associations outside Burgenland. Of the original 21 member associations of the *Zentralverband*, only 15 remain today. Among the still functioning Hungarian organizations in Austria, the oldest is the *Hungarian Association in Graz* founded in 1888. Among other organizations, the *Viennese Hungarian Labour Society*, founded in 1899, and the *Saint Stephen Society* established in 1918 also deserve mentioning.

Since the 1989 change of political regime in Hungary, the Hungarian Embassy in Vienna has developed an unbiased and correct relationship with Austria's Hungarian communities.

Since fall 1987, the *Zentralverband* maintains the „Hungarian School of Vienna” with a present enrolment of 100 students. Upon its initiative and intervention, instruction in the Hungarian language is successfully carried out since 1996 in five Vienna primary schools, with the participation of 150 students. In Mödling near Vienna, 30 students receive Hungarian-language instruction since 2000. In Linz, the teaching of the Hungarian language began in February 2000 under the auspices of the local Hungarian association. The *Zentralverband* is publishing Austria's sole Hungarian-language newspaper, *Bécsi Napló* (Vienna Journal). In addition, there are other periodical association newslet-

ters. Thus the Hungarian Cultural Association of Burgenland is publishing the periodical *Őrség*. A long-time demand of the Hungarians living in Vienna is the establishment of a Hungarian-language high school.

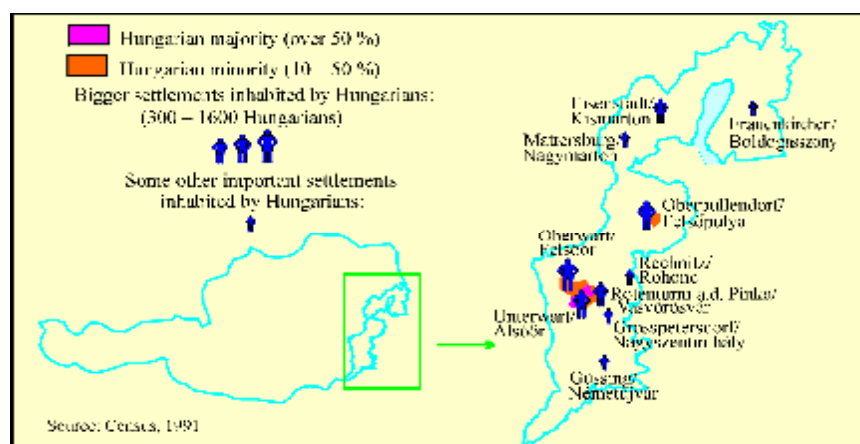
No independent Hungarian party or political organization functions in Austria.

The Zentralverband initiated and succeeded in having the Hungarians residing in Vienna and the surrounding areas officially recognized as an ethnic group. To this end, the Austrian government issued in 1992 an official declaration, which resulted since 1993 in a significant increase in the membership of the Ethnic Group Council from 8 to 16.

2. THE HUNGARIANS OF BURGENLAND (ŐRVIDÉK)

According to the 1991 census, the indigenous Hungarian community living in the province of Burgenland in eastern Austria numbers 6,763 based on the language used (Umgangssprache). This figure also includes the individuals who arrived as refugees and guest workers. Assimilation left a strong imprint on Burgenland's Hungarian community. Even though the assimilation process appears to be accelerating, a more resolute support of ethnic values could slow down this process. The opinion which says that assimilation of the Hungarian community in Burgenland is an entirely spontaneous process cannot be considered as fully reliable. For a considerable length of time, the difficulty of maintaining contact with Hungary, the greater frequency of mixed marriages, and the insufficiency of Hungarian-language instruction were significant contributing factors. Additional factors are the breaking up of the traditional, agriculture-oriented family structures and, parallel with it, the growing taking up of employment in and commuting to urban centres (Vienna, Graz, Wiener-Neustadt, etc.) outside of the Hungarian-language areas.

Figure 1 Hungarians in Burgenland



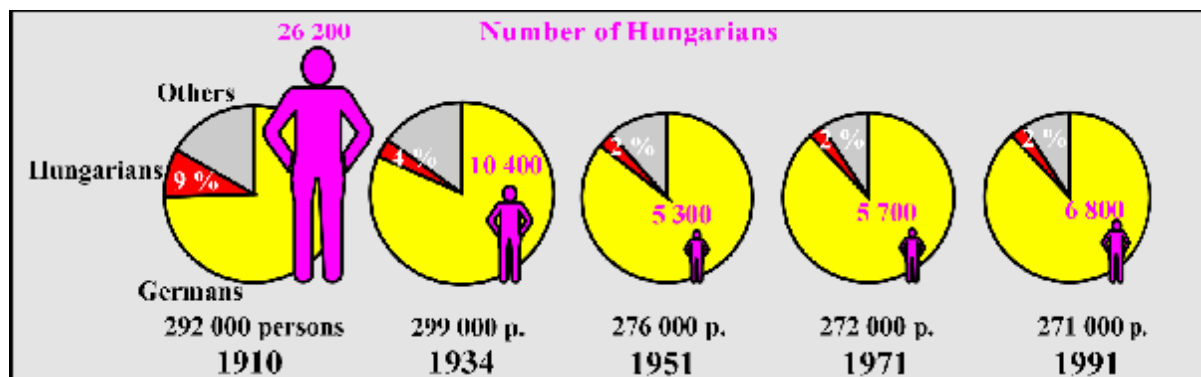
Since the 1920 census and the territorial changes following the Trianon Peace Treaty, the size of the Hungarian population in the province has decreased to one sixth of the original. While the 1920 Hungarian registry, based on native language, recorded 24,867 persons, according to the 1981 Austrian survey based on the language used for daily contacts, only 4,973 persons declared themselves as being Hungarian. In reality, the current Hungarian population (or those who culturally identify themselves as Hungarian) is estimated at some 5,000 to 10,000. The total population of Burgenland was 294,849 in 1920, 269,771 in 1981, and 270,880 in 1991. The ratio of the Hungarian population decreased from the original 8,4 percent to 1,5 percent in 1881 and rose again to 2.5 percent by 1991. This increase can be explained by the rise in immigration.

During the same periods, the share of the ethnic German population increased from 75,1 percent to 91 percent then diminished slightly to 88.27 percent, while the ethnic Croatian community – the most numerous ethnic group besides the Hungarians – decreased from 15,2 percent to 7 percent.

Table 1 *The distribution of ethnic Hungarians in Austria by province according to the 1991 census based on the language used*

Province	Austrian	Foreigner	Total	%
	(one thousand)			
Vienna	8,930	4,589	13,519	40.40
Burgenland	4,973	1,790	6,763	20.11
Lower-Austria	2,389	3,051	5,440	16.29
Upper-Austria	1,182	2,036	3,218	9.61
Carinthia	247	243	490	1.46
Salzburg	432	361	793	2.37
Styria	836	1,027	1,863	5.56
Tirol	347	324	671	2.00
Vorarlberg	302	400	702	2.10
Total	19,638	13,821	33,459	100.00

Figure 2 Burgenland's nationality composition and Hungarian population trend between 1910 and 1991



The legal standing of the nationalities living in Austria – „ethnic groups” („Volksgruppen”) according to official Austrian terminology – is regulated by the Law on Ethnic Groups (Volksgruppengesetz) of 1976 and the 1977 decree on the establishment of ethnic group councils. Going beyond fundamental human rights, the 1955 State Treaty (Staatsvertrag) separately recognizes the rights of Croatian and Slovenian nationalities, while making no mention of the Hungarian or Czech ethnic groups. However, the *Law on Ethnic Groups*, adopted on 7 July 1976, applies to five ethnic groups, including Hungarians as well. The law defines an ethnic group as „groups of Austrian citizens born and residing on federal territory whose native language is not German and who possess their own folk traditions” (Art.1, par.2). The law also calls for the establishment of ethnic group councils, to which end detailed regulations were laid down in the decree of 18 January 1977. In all of Austria, the Hungarian Ethnic Group Council has 16 voting members, of which 8 members are appointed and 8 are delegated by the various associations. The total number of members of the Council is divided equally between the Hungarian communities of Burgenland and those of Vienna and the surrounding areas. The law states that any Austrian citizen who is eligible for membership in Parliament and can be expected to represent the interests of the relevant ethnic group can become a member of the ethnic group council member. The ethnic group council is an advisory body without independent sphere of competence, and its members are appointed by the chancellor after being delegated by the respective organizations.

In 1997 the body made up of ethnic group council chairmen and their deputies drafted a joint memorandum which contains the demands of every ethnic group from school education to language use and the creation of mass media programs in the language of the ethnic groups. The memorandum was handed over on 24 June 1997 to the federal chancellor and the chairman of parliament. As a direct effect of the memorandum, bilingual locality signs (German–

Croatian and German–Hungarian, respectively) were erected in July 2000 in Burgenland. Following this measure, Felsőpulya (Oberpullendorf), Felsőőr (Oberwart), Alsóőr (Unterwart), and Órisziget (Siget in der Wart) received new bilingual locality signs.

Declared principles and demands are, however, not always adequately translated into practice. This is highlighted by the fact that since the end of 1995, the Burgenland cable television company has drastically cut the airtime of the Hungarian-language television programs. The cable company cited the decreasing number of viewers as a reason for its action. This move adversely affected the Hungarian community because Hungarian-language television programs play an important role as a source of information and in preserving national identity. Nevertheless, the Burgenland station of Austrian Radio and Television is broadcasting a weekly half-hour program in Hungarian. Since 1 January 2002, it also broadcasts daily from 18.55 to 19.00 hours Hungarian language ethnic group news, besides, every Monday from 20.50 to 21.00 hours a cultural program in Hungarian. There is also a half-hour television program two to three times annually, and six programs a year have been planned from 2002 on.

Minority education is regulated by Burgenland's 1994 Minority School Law; compulsory instruction of the minority language in elementary and higher elementary schools is prescribed in the 1995 provincial school law.

Based on the findings of the so-called 1977 *Nationality Survey*, mandatory teaching of the Hungarian language could take place in four Hungarian-inhabited settlements, namely in Felsőpulya (Oberpullendorf), Alsóőr (Unterwart), Felsőőr (Oberwart), and Órisziget (Siget in der Wart). In the 1980/81 school year, the number of schools teaching the Hungarian language increased to nine. Teaching of the Hungarian language three hours a week became mandatory in the higher elementary school of Felsőőr (Oberwart) at the start of the 1983/84 school year, and at the higher elementary school of Felsőpulya (Oberpullendorf) beginning with the 1984/85 school year. In accordance with the latest provisions, Hungarian language is an optional subject in elementary schools in Alsóőr (Unterwart) and Órisziget (Siget in der Wart), and an optional language exercise in ten additional elementary schools. Hungarian was taught on an experimental basis as a mandatory subject between 1983 and 1995 in the higher elementary school in Felsőőr (Oberwart) and Felsőpulya (Oberpullendorf) but the language of instruction is German. In three additional higher elementary schools, Hungarian language is an optional subject.

Since 1920, no independent Hungarian-language high school exists in Burgenland. A Hungarian-language faculty exists only in the high school of Felsőlövő (Oberschützen) since the 1981/82 school year. Moreover, the Felsőpulya

(Oberpullendorf) high school created a so-called „pannonian” class from the 1987/88 school year on, with the mandatory instruction of the Croatian or Hungarian language. In 1992, a bilingual high school opened its doors in Felsőőr (Oberwart) with both Hungarian and Croatian sections.

In the nursery schools, the language of communication is mostly German or mixed. Hungarian language education outside of the schools takes place mainly in so-called people’s colleges. Higher education institutions for training teachers have no Hungarian-language faculty.

Some two-thirds of the Hungarians in Burgenland are Roman Catholic. In 1998, the parish of Alsóőr (Unterwart) came under the jurisdiction of the Head Abbey of the Benedictine Order in Pannonhalma, Hungary, opening new possibilities for providing spiritual care to the Hungarian Roman Catholic faithful living abroad. The majority of the Hungarian Catholic priests completed their studies in Hungary. The need to provide seminary training at the Pazmaneum Institute in Vienna for Hungarian priests for the scattered Hungarian communities abroad has also arisen. Since 1948, the archbishopric of Vienna took over the management of the Pazmaneum but in February 2002 the institute was placed again under the authority of the archbishopric of Esztergom in Hungary.

The Reformed (Calvinist) Church of Burgenland has its only congregation in Felsőőr (Oberwart), while the Lutheran Church has one in Őrsziget (Siget in der Wart). The assimilation of these congregations is at an advanced stage because many of the Sunday and holiday religious services are bilingual and once a month in the German language. Training for the ministers of the Protestant Churches also takes place mainly in Hungary.

The *Hungarian Cultural Association of Burgenland*, formed in 1968, is the main interest representation body of the indigenous Hungarian ethnic group in the province.

3. HUNGARIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA

Zentralverband — Central Federation of Hungarian Organizations and Associations in Austria

President: Dr. Ernő Deák

Péter Bornemissza Society

President: vacant

Dachverband — Hungarian Labor Society in Vienna

President: Anna Pokorny

Hungarian Cultural Association of Burgenland

President: Dr. József Plank

Hungarian Cultural Institute of Órvidék

Headed by: Dr. Iréneusz Galambos OSB

Ungarisches Medien- und Informationszentrum (UMIZ) – Hungarian Media and Information Center

Director: László Kelemen

Zentralverband Ungarischer Vereine und Organisationen in Österreich – Central Alliance of Hungarian Associations and Organizations in Austria

Founded: 7 February 1980, Vienna

Objectives: The representation of the community (organizational) interests of Hungarians of Austrian citizenship toward the relevant authorities, as well as abroad. The recognition of the Hungarian ethnic groups of Austrian nationality outside of Burgenland as an ethnic community serves this purpose. This took place with respect to the Hungarians in Vienna and Lower Austria with the approval of the Austrian government in 1992.

Functions:

- representative body
- coordinating authority
- organizational centre

Activities:

- Organizing Hungarian national celebrations (March 15, the commemoration of the 1848 Revolution; October 23, the commemoration of the 1956 Revolution)
- Bimonthly publication of *Bécsi Napló* (*Vienna Journal*) since March 1980; publication of the trilingual *Őrség Calendar* (since 1985); publishing house by the name of Sodalitas (reminiscent of the Danubian Scholars' Society of 1497–1508);
- Maintaining since September 1988 the so-called Hungarian School of Vienna;
- Holding biannual conferences of Hungarians living in Western Europe and of minority Hungarians entitled: „Being a minority is no fate but a mission” (Kismarton/Eisenstadt/, 1992); „Organization and network system of scattered Hungarian minorities” (Innsbruck, 1994); „Consciousness and History” (Felsőpulya/Oberpullendorf/, 7–8 September 1996); „1848-1849: Legacy and

Remembrance” (Felsőpulya/Oberpullendorf, 1998; „What is Man Worth if Hungarian? The Historical Components of Hungarian Consciousness” (Kufstein, 1999);

- Publishing and disseminating the materials of the conferences;
- In September 1991, the Zentralverband held the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Count István Széchenyi, an illustrious Hungarian philanthropist and a leading political figure in the 1840s, and organized a scientific conference in German;
- „Hungarian Theatre of Vienna” – guest performance two to three times a year since 1995 of Hungarian minority theatre companies;
- Joint celebration on 18 May 1996 in Felsőőr (Oberwart) by the Zentralverband and the Hungarian Cultural Association of Burgenland of the 1100th anniversary of the arrival of the Hungarian tribes into the Carpathian basin, and the millennium of the first mention of Austria;
- Historical conference in Felsőpulya (Oberpullendorf) on 7–8 September 1996;
- Commemoration by the Zentralverband on 26 October 1996 of the 40th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution in Mosonmagyaróvár and Mosontarcsa (Andau);
- Organization by the Zentralverband on 4 November 1996 of a reception to express gratitude to Austrian and international aid organizations, as well as to the Vienna representations of those Western countries which supported and admitted Hungarian refugees;
- Inauguration on 16 June 2000 of the „Hungarian House in Vienna” and publication for that occasion of the documentary volume „At Home in Austria” on the activities of the Zentralverband and its member associations.

Millenary programs:

- Meeting in Felsőpulya (Oberpullendorf) on 9–10 September 2000;
- Holding on 23 September 2000 of an international folklore festival in Vienna’s city hall with the participation of Hungarian choirs and dance ensembles from eight countries; holding on 20–21 October of a German-language international conference on the topic of *One-Thousand Years of Living Together in Central Europe*.

Other activities:

- Publication for more than ten years of the program bulletin listing the events organized by the Hungarian associations in Vienna;
- Organization of occasional exhibits and concerts.

Member Associations:

Vienna:

- *Hungarian Roman Catholic Congregation*
- *St. Stephan Society*
- *„Europa” Club*
- *Hungarian Church Sociological Institute*
- *„Kalácsa” Club; Economic Interest Community of Hungarians in Austria*

Graz:

- *Hungarian Roman Catholic Congregation*
- *Christiana Hungaria*
- *Club of Hungarian Students and Academics*

Linz:

- *Hungarian Roman Catholic Congregation*
- *Hungarian Cultural Association of Upper-Austria*
- *„Árpád” boy scout troop No. 80*

Salzburg:

- *Hungarian Circle of Salzburg*

Innsbruck:

- *Hungarian Roman Catholic Church Council*
- *Federation of Hungarian Academics and University Students of Innsbruck*
- *Hungarian Student Hostel Society*

The Hungarian Ethnic Group Council consists of 16 members, 8 of whom represent the Hungarians in Burgenland and 8 those in Vienna (and also Lower-Austria).



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Abroad

☎ 1518 Budapest 112, Pf. 43,
1016 Bécs u. 13–15.

• ☎: 466-9406, 466-9434 • Fax: 385-2601

• Web-site: <http://www.htmh.hu>

• E-mail: htmh@mail.datanet.hu

Edited by: Dr. Tibor Bártai

Maps and figures: Dr. László Sebők