



# **Reports on the Situation of Hungarians Living Abroad**

Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad

## **Hungarians in Austria 2001**

### C o n t e n t s :

Preface .....	2
1. The Hungarian Immigrants .....	4
2. The Hungarians of Burgenland (Őrvidék) .....	7
3. Hungarian Organizations in the Republic of Austria .....	11

## *Preface*

*Close to a year ago, when our Office published the new series of regional reports about the situation of the Hungarian communities abroad, it was our firm intention – as we promised at the press conference presenting these publications – to update annually our regional reports. Accordingly, the visitor of our site now can browse the „corrected” edition for the year 2001 of the reports covering the period up to 1999 which now also contain the most important events and data for the year 2000.*

*How was this millenium year the most outstanding events of which are also included in this new edition? One of the most important events of the past year was undoubtedly the advent of democracy in our southern neighbor Yugoslavia, as a result of which the representatives and legitimate organizations of the Hungarians living there came to assume a role in the government in yet another neighboring country. Such an important change may easily lead even experts in the field to exaggerations, and it is therefore necessary to keep some distance from the emotional aspects of the events and to stick to reality. If we look at the year 2000 with this self-imposed restraint, we can in my opinion say that the year behind us brought no small results with regard to our efforts related to the Hungarians living abroad.*

*Upon taking office in 1998, Hungary’s civil government reformulated the directions of its foreign policy activities but the main objectives of its foreign policy efforts, which evolved in the 1990s on the basis and support of a general national consensus remained Euro-atlantic integration – including the development of goodneighborly relations – and national policy. In the past year the government paid particular attention to the maintainance of a genuine balance between these trends of action so that none of them would take precedence over the other, and none could assert itself to the detriment of the other. These trends not only organically complement each other but each of them presupposes the other, making them closely interrelated.*

*The government’s policy regarding the Hungarians abroad aims at supporting their communities so that they may be able to face and meet the challenges of the third millenium in their place of birth. The same intent is also reflected in the law on the Hungarians living in neighboring countries being drafted which, for the first time since the 1920 Trianon Treaty, attempts to resolve the relations between the mother country and its former regions which eighty years ago became part of various other states.*

*According to the foreign policy pursued by the government since 1998, the preliminary and fundamental condition of an effective and successful foreign policy is the stability of our region, which we can influence in a positive manner with the resolution of the situation of the Hungarian communities abroad.*

Civil pluralism and the democratic values which have increasingly taken roots – albeit to differing degrees – played and continued to play a major role in our relations with the neighboring countries on the basis of a regular dialogue, and the same applies to them. This, however, did not result in any particular change in bilateral relations either when the Hungarians' legitimate political organization was no longer part of the political power or when, remaining inside that power and taking upon itself the tensions of a coalition government, it tried to assert also in practice its rightful demands which had already been accepted earlier by its partners.

Of course, the past year has not been without occasional tensions and conflicts between the organizations of the Hungarians abroad and the state and governmental bodies of the countries involved. It is enough to merely list, without trying to be complete, such matters in dispute as the question of the establishment of an independent state university and the continued non-resolution of the restitution of confiscated church real estate in Romania, or the problem of the so-called non-registered lands and the differences of opinions regarding the reform of public administration in Slovakia.

Even so, next to the numerous disputed questions and the many – and in some cases painfully bitter – involuntary concessions made by the Hungarian political interest representation organizations, the Hungarian communities abroad have increasingly become highly visible and indispensable actors in the stability of the region.

It was not possible to fully fill last year the half-empty glass to which the situation of the Hungarians abroad has been compared in relation to their rightful expectations, but this could hardly be expected when proceeding from actual realities. However, the contents of the glass increased considerably and basically not with diluted promises or mere illusions.

Those for whom the half-empty glass was too much even before are at present naturally trying to slow down the trend with less harsh methods. The fact that they are doing it so would already be by itself no small achievement. At the same time, it is the common responsibility of all of us – the relevant Hungarian communities abroad, the mother country, and also the progressive forces interested in the democratic development of society in the given majority countries and in the stability of the region – to make sure that the zeal of those trying to slow down the positive trends will not succeed.

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 centers 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.

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 center 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 center 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 rectorates 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 which 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 older organizations, the *Viennese Hungarian Labor 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 a unbiased and correct relationship with Austria's Hungarian communities.

Since fall 1987, the *Zentralverband* maintains the „Hungarian School of Vienna” with a present enrollment 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 newsletters. 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.

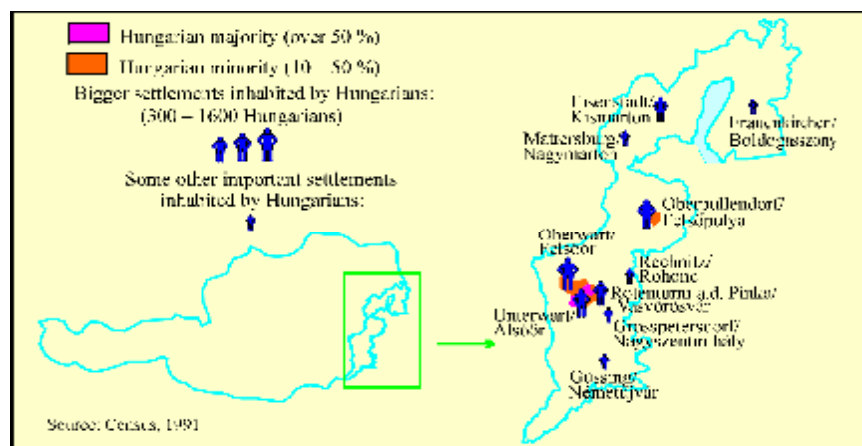
No independent Hungarian party or political organization functions in Austria.

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). 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 centers (Vienna, Graz, Wiener-Neustadt, etc.) outside of the Hungarian-language areas.

**Figure 1** Hungarians in Burgenland



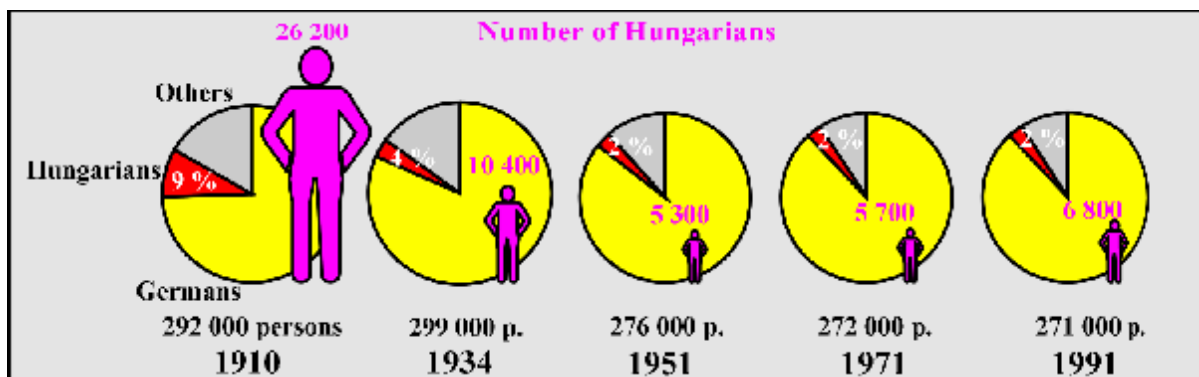
Since the 1920 census and the territorial changes following the Trianon Peace Treaty, the size of the Hungarian population in the province has decreased to one sixth of the original. While the 1920 Hungarian registry, based on native language, recorded 24,867 persons, according to the 1981 Austrian survey 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 and 269,771 in 1981. The ratio of the Hungarian population decreased from 8,4 percent to 1,5 percent during this period. Meanwhile, the share of the ethnic German population increased from 75,1 percent to 91 percent, while the ethnic Croatian community – the most numerous minority group besides the Hungarians – also 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,638</b>	<b>13,821</b>	<b>33,459</b>	<b>100.00</b>



**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.

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 air time of the Hungarian-language television programs. The cable company cited decreasing viewership 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 the Hungarian language and a half-hour television program two to three times annually.

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 Abbacy of 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.

The Reformed (Calvinist) Church of Burgenland has its only congregation in Felsőőr (Oberwart), while the Lutheran Church has one in Órisziget (Siget in der Wart). The assimilation of these congregations is at an advanced stage because a considerable part of the religious services are conducted in German. 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: Julianna Tölly

#### **Hungarian Cultural Institute of Órvidék**

Headed by: Dr. Iréneusz Galambos OSB

## 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 center

### **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” (Feksőpulya /Oberpullendorf/, 7-8 September 1996); „Finding the way into the future” (Kufstein, 1999);
- Publishing and disseminating the materials of the conferences;
- In September 1991, the Zentralverband held the commemoration of the 200<sup>th</sup> 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 Theater 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 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the Hungarian tribes into the Carpathian basin, and the millenium of the first mention of Austria;

- Commemoration by the Zentralverband on 26 October 1996 of the 40<sup>th</sup> 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;
- 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*;
- 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*
- *„Kaláka” 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*

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).



**Reports  
On the Situation  
of Hungarians Living Abroad**

Published by: Tibor Szabó

© Government Office for Hungarian Minorities  
Abroad

☒ 1518 Budapest 112, Pf. 43,  
1016 Bérc u. 13-15.

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

• Web-site: <http://www.htmh.hu>

• E-mail: [htmh@mail.datanet.hu](mailto:htmh@mail.datanet.hu)

Edited by: Dr. Tibor Bártai

Maps and figures: Dr. László Sebők