



Reports on the Situation of Hungarians Living Abroad

Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad

Hungarians in Austria 2000

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Preface

After decades of repression and following the 1989 collapse of the communist dictatorships and the first free elections in 1990, we were able to witness, along with the experience of individual and community liberation, the simultaneous renaissance of nation-state aspirations in the Carpathian Basin. This is understandable as long as, through the acceptance of national values taken out of the past and the world of traditions, the ideas which are made current again serve the purpose of peaceful social and intellectual building. Should, however, these nation-state aspirations – as shown by the tragic events that took place in the past decade on the territory of the former Yugoslavia – lead to impatience, exclusiveness, and the assertion of interests by force, the peace and future of entire regions and ultimately that of the whole continent are in danger. Today, the countries of Central and Southeast Europe seeking to build civic nation-states are still threatened by the remaining powerful political forces of postcommunist nation-statehood. The democratic societies which are to be built upon traditional national values are still confronted by the survival of national dictatorships seeking to salvage the instruments of totalitarian policies – a phenomenon which can be present not only within the region but within a single country.

A particularly sensitive element of the birth pains of the new nation-states is the recognition and acceptance of the presence of national minorities. Nation states unable to free themselves from the constraints of the totalitarian legacy can be born only under the sign of totalitarianism, and will inevitably select the tools for building their country and home from the accessories of dictatorships. A nation-state created with the instruments of force does not display the slightest sign of tolerance toward other nations and especially toward the particular world and value system of the national minorities living on its territory. In every such case, the nation and the state come into insoluble opposition, and it is hard to imagine a compromise between the community-building system of values and the assertion of interests by the holders of political power. In this regard, there is only one single possible road today: if, in harmony with European aspirations, the role and importance of the state is gradually relegated to the background and reduced, and the national values will find their way back to their original source, namely the human element of tradition and culture. From the eclipse of the role of the state we simply expect the elimination of the possibility to intervene by force through any instrument of political power into the advocacy of individual and community values. Once this threshold is crossed, the notion of „national minority”, used in the majority of cases in a discriminative manner, will simultaneously lose its special meaning, and the political obstacles to the cohabitation of communities with differing ethnic identities will also disappear.

In 1989–1990, the Hungarian national communities living on the territory of Hungary’s neighbours, true to their history, chose the road of society-building by peaceful means, which meant that in the face of the threat of forceful assimilation, they considered the possibilities offered by national integration as the basic principle of the policy that would ensure the future of their community. In following these viewpoints, they worked out in the past decade the system of their basic principles of community self-determination – self-governance, autonomy – and made resolute efforts to become sovereign political communities. It is a fact that the integration processes developing nowadays in

Europe and the efforts towards the legal guaranteeing of minority and collective rights, such as the Council of Europe's Framework Agreement on the Protection of National Minorities or the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages, have strengthened their intents and efforts.

The Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad has been given a decisive role within this system as a governmental coordinating organization. Throughout the decade of its existence, it has closely followed the work of the Hungarian interest representation organizations and political parties, has supported their society building aspirations and forwarded their legitimate demands to the European and international forums. As a governmental office, it has provided the Hungarian national communities with professional expertise upon which they can always count and which has resulted in the widening and deepening of the integration processes. To fully shoulder its task and its mediating activity, the Office needs lively contacts and day-to-day knowledge of the facts. This is a most complex process which is also shown by the just completed country reports. These reports indicate that the representation and successful support of the interests of the Hungarian minorities abroad struggling for close to eight decades for their community rights can take place only and exclusively on the basis of a detailed knowledge of socio-political reality and economic endowments.

At the turn of the millenium, the current government of Hungary saw the time ripe for the establishment of the Hungarian Standing Conference (HSC) as a national forum to harmonize interests. This was the prime reason for the preparation of the situation reports evaluating the results achieved by the Hungarian minorities abroad. At the same time, the HSC's committees of experts set up to ensure the achievement of the national integration process, keeping in mind the European requirements of Union accession, have inevitably become the forums for the democratization of the entire Carpathian Basin. We all hope now that the time has come for Hungarians to leave behind their difficult situation and constraints and move ahead in harmony with European values in order to start rebuilding their society in an institutional form that conforms to their traditions. In this endeavor, new and more complex tasks and challenges than until now are awaiting the Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad.

Tibor Szabó
Chairman



The Situation of Hungarians in Austria

Currently, some 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

While the Hungarian diaspora evolved during the era of Austro-Hungarian personal union, which lasted until 1918, political and economic migration to Austria on a larger scale became significant only during the interwar period and following the 1956 Revolution.

After 1945, a great number of Hungarian military and civilian refugees remained in Austria, especially in the territories occupied by Western powers. In subsequent years, 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.

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, Count József Pálffy and 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.

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. Among the better known charity and aid organizations operating in Austria at the time, one must primarily mention *First Aid for Hungary* headed by Lt.General Béla Lengyel, *Free Europe Citizen Service*, *Forumhilfe*, *Volkshilfe* and *Hungarian Refugee Service* led by László Taubinger. Operating as Hungarian aid organizations, these groups provided financial support as well as information and administrative assistance to the refugees. Their activities, however, were dwarfed by the relief measures taken by the Austrian Ministry of the Interior, the Red Cross, and the activities in Austria of the refugee services of various other countries.

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 played a minor role in community life and were generally short lived in or left neutral Austria.

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

Today, the *Central Federation of Hungarian Associations and Organizations in Austria (Zentralverband)*, established in 1980, serves as the top body of Hungarian associations outside Burgenland. Of the original 21 member associations of the *Zentralverband*, only 15 remain today. The *Viennese Hungarian Labor Society*, founded in 1899, and the various activities of Catholic and Protestant parishes across Austria also deserve mentioning. Since the 1989 change of the political regime in Hungary, the Hungarian Embassy in Vienna has developed a businesslike and correct relationship with Austria's Hungarian communities.

Since 1966, Hungarian language is successfully taught in four primary schools in Vienna, with a current enrollment of 100 students. The *Zentralverband* maintains the *Hungarian School of Vienna* with 20 students at present, which has been in operation for ten years, and publishes Austria's only Hungarian-language newspaper, the *Viennese Journal*. In addition, newsletters published by various associations are disseminated



periodically. The establishment of a Hungarian-language high school has long been a major demand of the Hungarian community in Vienna.

No independent Hungarian party or political organization exists 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 a previous 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. That assimilation of the Hungarian community in Burgenland is an entirely spontaneous process is an opinion that cannot be considered as fully reliable. For a considerable length of time, the difficulty of maintaining contact with Hungary was a significant contributing factor. In addition, the subtle but continuous acceleration of assimilation on the part of Austria also played an important role. In recent times, reasons for this process arose from those Austrian economic concerns which claim that Burgenland investors have shown since the 1989 change of Hungary's political system and the opening of the border a more rapidly growing interest in the western regions of Hungary than in their own province.

Figure 1 Hungarians in Burgenland

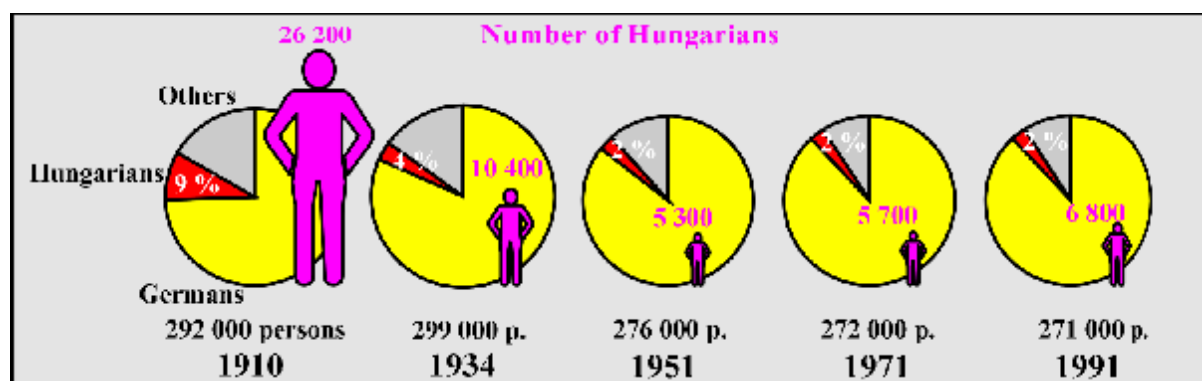


Since the 1920 census and the territorial change following the Trianon Peace Treaty, the size of the Hungarian population in the province has decreased to one sixth of the original. While the 1920 Hungarian registry, based on native language, recorded 24,867 persons, according to the 1981 Austrian survey 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
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*, passed on 7 July 1976, applies to four 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 can become an ethnic group council member. The ethnic group councils can submit proposals to and advise the federal government and ministerial officers.

At a meeting held in Klagenfurt on 19-20 April 1985, representatives of the ethnic groups of Austria released the *Basic Act on Ethnic Groups living in Austria*. The document lists all principles and practical requirements in conjunction with fundamental minority rights with which the Law on Ethnic Groups must be supplemented. These include free use of the native-language (spoken or written) in everyday life and in official administration, rights for native-language education and instruction, native-tongue religious worship, eligibility for official positions without discrimination, and the availability of television and radio broadcasts in the native language.

However, declared principles and demands are 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.

Legal regulations pertaining to minority education were last modified by the 1976 Law on Ethnic Groups. The law states that the compulsory teaching of the minority-language in public and elementary schools can be ensured only if the minority makes up at least 25 percent of the total population of the given settlement. Based on the

findings of the so-called 1976 *Nationality Survey*, mandatory teaching of the Hungarian language could take place in four Hungarian-inhabited settlements, namely in Oberpullendorf (Felsőpulya), Unterwart (Alsóőr), Oberwart (Felsőőr), and Siget in der Wart (Őrsziget). 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 Oberwart at the start of the 1983/84 school year, and at the higher elementary school of Oberpullendorf beginning with the 1984/85 school year.

Since 1920, no independent Hungarian-language high school exists in Burgenland. A Hungarian-language faculty exists only in the high school of Felsőlövő since the 1981/82 school year. Moreover, the 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 Oberwart with both Hungarian and Croatian sections.

In the nursery schools, the language of instruction 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 Unterwart came under the jurisdiction of the Head Abbacy 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 Oberwart, while the Lutheran Church has one in 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: István Szépfalusi

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 *Órség Calendar* (since 1985); publishing house by the name of Sodalitas (reminiscent of the Danubian Scholars' Society of 1497–1508);
- Maintaining the Hungarian School of Vienna located in Vienna's Uránia (since September 1988);



- Holding biannual conferences of Hungarians living in Western Europe and of minority Hungarians entitled: „Being a minority is no fate but a mission” (Eisenstadt /Kismarton/, 1992); „Organization and network system of scattered Hungarian minorities” (Innsbruck, 1994); „Consciousness and History” (Oberpullendorf /Felsőpulya/, 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 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;
- On 18 May 1996, in Oberwart, the Zentralverband and the Hungarian Cultural Association of Burgenland jointly celebrated the 1100th anniversary of the arrival of the Hungarian tribes into the Carpathian basin, and the millenium of the first mention of Austria;
- On 26 October 1996, the Zentralverband held the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution in Mosonmagyaróvár and Andau (Mosontarcsa);
- On 4 November 1996, the Zentralverband organized a reception to express gratitude to Austrian and international aid organizations, as well as to the Vienna representations of Western countries which supported and admitted Hungarian refugees.

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*
- *Christina 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).



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