

PROTOCOL

of the 4th session of the Hungarian-Slovenian Minority Joint Committee convened to monitor the fulfillment of provisions of the Agreement signed on November 6, 1992, guaranteeing the special rights of the Hungarian national community living in the Republic of Slovenia and the Slovenian national minority living in the Republic of Hungary

The Hungarian-Slovenian Minority Joint Committee held its 4th session on February 1-2, 1999, in Szentgotthard. The Hungarian delegation was led by Tibor Szabo, President of the Office for Hungarians Abroad, and the Slovenian delegation was led by Peter Winkler, Director of the government of the Republic of Slovenia's Office for Nationalities.

I.

1. The Parties, during the exchange of opinions regarding current issues of minority protection, determined that from a legal standpoint the situation of the Slovenian national minority living in Hungary and the Hungarian national community living in the Republic of Slovenia is settled, and that to this day the Minority Protection Agreement signed in 1992 continues to ensure a sufficient framework for protecting the rights of the concerned minorities and the individuals belonging to them.

The experiences of cooperation in minority protection between the two Parties make it possible for their joint intervention in international fora in the interest of expanding legal norms for minority protection.

II.

The Joint Committee reviewed the fulfillment of the recommendations from the 3rd session and established that:

1. The two concerned minority communities - from the standpoint of assimilation - continue to deserve special attention and support from the mother countries.
2. While in Slovenia the issuing of the national minorities' bilingual identity documents has been settled, in Hungary until now substantive progress has not been made in this matter. Preparation of a new family of documents has begun in the Interior Ministry, and in this framework the introduction of bilingual identity documents could come about as well.
3. The six border crossings on the Hungarian-Slovenian border have a positive effect on the area's economic and psychic development, and on the minorities' relations with their mother countries. At the same time problems appear because of the opening

hours, various restrictions (nationality, the categories and weights of vehicles), and accessibility from the Hungarian side (Letenye-Tornyiszentmiklos). Preparations continue in the interest of the classification of the border station between Pince and Tornyiszentmiklos as an international border crossing.

4. In 1998, the bilateral agreement guaranteeing the crossing of borders with personal identity cards came into force.

5. The restoration of railway connections between the two countries is underway. Preparations for the realization of the joint Bajansenye-Hodos railway crossing began, and work on the section to Zalaegerszeg - according to the plans - will finish by 2000. The designation of the route of the Redics-Lendava industrial railway is an open question.

6. The Slovenian Consulate General opened in Szentgotthard on November 18, 1998. The Hungarian Party initiated the appointment of honorary Hungarian consul in Lendava.

7. The placement conditions of the institutions of the Slovenians in Hungary significantly improved in 1998 in that on June 28 the central headquarters of the Slovenian Self-Government in Felsoszonok, and following this on August 20 the branch office in Budapest, was inaugurated.

8. As a result of the minority self-government elections held on October 18, 1998, a total of 10 Slovenian minority self-governments can operate in Hungary for the next four years. New self-governments were formed in the 18th District of Budapest, in Mosonmagyaróvár, in Szakonyfalu and in Szombathely. The new national self-government elections take place in February 1999.

On the occasion of the self-government elections held in the Republic of Slovenia on November 22, 1998, the Hungarian national community elected representatives in five villages in place of the earlier three. In the two new villages, Hodos and Dobronak, nationality self-management councils were also formed. The Mura Region Nationality Self-Management Community elected a new council in January 1999.

9. The Slovenian-Hungarian Cross-Border Regional Council, in which Vas and Zala Counties as well as the Slovenian villages bordering Hungary take part, is working effectively. During the cooperation the participants raised the question of having the area declared a Euroregion.

10. Hungarian state support for the renovation of the church in Apatistvánfalva can continue. In a year and a half a Slovenian mother-tongue Catholic priest will take up his duties in the Mura Region.

11. The representatives of both minorities called attention to the fact that the Joint Committees' recommendations, especially in regard to the conditions of education and information, are fulfilled too slowly and in some cases late or not at all.

12. According to a decree of the Slovenian Parliament, members of the autochthonous minorities (among them the Hungarian national community) - through competitive

applications - can receive favorable conditions for loans. Through a separate decree it also ensures different forms of support for members of the Slovenian communities in neighboring countries.

In the area of education

1. The equivalency agreement between the two states was initialed, and thus the agreement ensuring the mutual recognition of diplomas will be signed in the first quarter of 1999.
2. Despite the efforts of the Hungarian government (the reform of the central support system for small nationality schools and the raising of supplementary normative payments), the financial problems of self-governments that maintain schools teaching in Slovenian with small student populations in small settlements in Hungary have not eased considerably.
3. The placement of a Hungarian mother-tongue professional advisor, with an assignment similar to that of the Slovenian instructor in Szentgotthard, for the purpose of raising the importance and level of Hungarian-language teaching in the Slovenian bilingual schools, has not taken place.
4. As a result of regional solidarity, progress took place in the matter of textbooks serving the religious education of Hungarian Catholic children in the Mura Region. Following the translation and professional editorial work, textbooks for the first three grades foreseeably will be published in 1999.
5. In Hungary and in Slovenia, the programs connected with the further professional training of teachers from nationality and bilingual schools, and with the exchange of textbooks and students, continue. Regional educational cooperation is also productive.

In the area of general education and information

1. The Slovenian cultural and information center in Szentgotthard, with a conference room and hotel, began its operation on November 18, 1998, with predominantly Slovenian state support. Construction continues work on the community center in Lendava, on the basis of plans by Imre Makovecz, and the ceremonial inauguration is planned for 1999.
2. Preparation of the Slovenian-language radio program in Szentgotthard is underway. A free frequency is available, but the National Radio and Television Commission (ORTT) has not yet issued a tender for allocating the frequency.
3. The Banffy Hungarian Bookstore opened its doors in Lendava on March 15, 1998, but due to the closure of A-Banka the ownership rights of the premises are unsettled.

4. Intensive cooperation continues between Zala and Vas Counties and the border villages of the Mura Region, in the interest of which cooperation agreements are signed from year to year.

III.

The Joint Committee makes the following recommendations to both governments:

In the area of general issues

1. In the course of developing cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Slovenia, the governments shall take into account the needs and interests of the Hungarian and Slovenian minorities on both sides of the border.

2. The Parties shall undertake responsibility for giving more emphasis to fulfilling the recommendations expressed at the Joint Committee sessions. Implementation - according to the possibilities - shall be guaranteed in the form of governmental decrees.

3. The Parties shall do everything in the interest that the border crossing between Cepinci and Ketvolgy opens as soon as possible, and that the declaration of the Pince-Tornyiszentmiklos border crossing as an international crossing be finished as soon as possible. They shall examine the possibility of the designation of the Felsoszolnok-Martinje border crossing as an international crossing, and of starting two-way cargo traffic (trucks of up to 3.5 tons) at the Bajansenye-Hodos border crossing.

Both Parties shall examine the possibility that the border crossings designated for local border traffic - in the interest of regional tourism, economic cooperation and the carrying out of joint PHARE projects - exceptionally and on a case-by-case basis be made open to the citizens of other countries (primarily Austria), and that their opening hours be lengthened.

4. The Parties call it to their governments' attention that improving the condition of the highways (M7, M70 and M75) is an important task from the standpoint of the development of economic cooperation between the two countries.

5. The Parties shall more consistently continue the economic development of the areas inhabited by the two minorities and in this field take advantage of the PHARE-CBC program possibilities and instruments. They shall establish a joint economic-financial fund for the support of the underdeveloped border regions. They shall consider - beyond using PHARE and EU targeted assistance possibilities - including Austria as well for the purpose of moving forward regional cooperation.

6. The Parties shall do everything in the interest that the employment agreement already initiated by the two concerned ministries *[a verb is missing from Hungarian original]*.

7. The Parties, by joint intervention, shall initiate the expansion of legal norms for minority protection in the European Union and at the Council of Europe.

8. The Hungarian Party shall as soon as possible take the necessary steps in the interest of ensuring the nationality language use and bilingual identity documents.

In the area of education

1. The Hungarian Party shall do everything in the interest of the continuity of Slovenian mother-tongue education. It shall examine the possibility of how to attain comprehensive financing from the central state budget for the Slovenian nationality schools with small student populations.

2. The Slovenian Party shall fit further professional education in Hungary for teachers from the Mura Region into the Slovenian further education system.

3. The Hungarian Party shall, by the beginning of the coming school year, solve the placement of the Hungarian mother-tongue professional advisor in Lendava. The concerned ministries shall agree upon questions related to the status of professional advisors as soon as possible.

4. The Parties shall examine the possibility of how the continuous decrease in the number of Hungarian university and college students from Slovenia studying in Hungary can be stopped.

5. The two countries education ministries shall make possible the prompt signing of the agreement ensuring the mutual recognition of diplomas

In the area of general education and information

1. The Hungarian Party shall make it possible that the issuing of a tender for the local frequency take place, on the part of the ORTT, so that the Slovenian-language radio program in Szentgotthard can begin in 1999. For this the Hungarian government - according to the possibilities - shall provide material support also.

2. The Joint Committee recommends that the national television companies take steps for the reciprocal reception and broadcasting of the programs prepared by the national minorities.

3. Both governments shall take the necessary steps so that the inauguration of the community house in Lendava will take place in 1999.

4. The Slovenian Party shall help with a calming solution to the problem with the premises of the Banffy Hungarian Bookstore.
5. The Slovenian Party shall undertake to establish a mobile-library bus for the Slovenian community in the Raba Region.
6. The Slovenian Party shall take steps for a settlement of the status of the Lendava Museum and Library that is also acceptable to the Hungarian community.
7. The Hungarian Party shall provide support to the Hungarian community in Slovenia for a worthy celebration of the 1000th anniversary of the founding of the Hungarian state.

The Parties agreed to hold their next session in Slovenia.

The Protocol was prepared in two copies, in Hungarian and in Slovenian. Both versions are authoritative.

President of the Slovenian Section
of the Joint Committee

Peter WINKLER

President of the Hungarian Section
of the Joint Committee

Tibor SZABO

Szentgotthard, February 2, 1999