

Playing the ‘Hungarian Card’: Government restrictiveness, host-kin relations and minority behavior of Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this thesis is to examine the effects of politics, host-kin relations and language policies on the Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia, respectively. The scope of my research concentrates on the behavior of minorities, which is analyzed by observing education, language use and activism of minorities. Despite the complexness and differences in the countries' policies, the developments in Slovakia's minority laws and the conditions for minorities are more restrictive than the ones of Romania. My research indicates that regardless of the restrictiveness of Slovakia's government, the minority is less active, mobilized and participatory than the Hungarian minority in Romania.

The thesis opens with a brief introduction on the topic of language and government policies. The introduction also briefly outlines the methodology of the thesis and states the hypothesis. The first chapter provides an overview of the two Hungarian minorities in the past 20 years, as well as an outline of the current situation in both countries, taking the historical context, developments in the respective governments, relations with Hungary and the legislative situation (with a specific focus on language policies) of minorities into consideration. Consequently, I analyze the differences in the status of Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia, and their effects on education, language use and minority activism. Finally, I come to a conclusion presenting my findings and making suggestions for further research.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the main driving forces behind national unity and a basic pillar of a nation. For Hungarians beyond the borders of Hungary, this unity and national identity is often contested – partially because of the simple reason of distance from the motherland, and in some cases because of the restrictive manners of the ‘hosting’ country, in this case Slovakia and Romania.¹

National languages are the most important tools for successful national cultural reproduction, linking the individuals of a nation with their national homelands. Its preservation is essential for the maintenance of a national identity. The purity of a language is also one of the predispositions to prevent complete assimilation of a minority. The issues of language use are hence important for the minority as well as the majority.

Language policies create rules for the use of language in public areas that include street signs, language in schools, hospitals, administrative buildings and state and local authorities. Ethnic Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia demand augmentation of the status of Hungarian in the respective countries, in line with a desire to “live their lives – as fully as possible – in Hungarian.”² Despite this similarity in desires, the level, frequency, intensity and form of demands differ in each country. For individuals belonging to the Hungarian minority, however, language does not only have a symbolic value – it greatly influences their everyday lives by the number of available jobs or education opportunities, for example.

¹ Although Slovakia and Romania are labeled as ‘host’ countries in most literature as well as this thesis, it is important to note that this interpretation could be misleading, as the Hungarian population did not move, it was the borders that moved and caused the ‘displacement’ of the peoples and consequent emergence of minorities. The label ‘host’ state infers that the country receives a diaspora, which is not the case of Slovakia and Romania regarding minorities.

² Csergo, Zsuzsa. *Talk of the Nation: Language and Conflict in Romania and Slovakia*. Cornell UP, 2007. 145. Print.

In order to assess the importance of government policies combined with historical context and host-kin relations in the specific cases of Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia, this thesis analyzes their effects through observing Hungarian language education, use of Hungarian in public and official domains and activism of the Hungarian minority. The subsequent research question that arises is *“What are the effects of government restrictiveness, historical context and host-kin relations on minority behavior?”*

The activism of the Hungarian minorities is studied through several institutions, movements and forums established by the minorities in both countries. As discussed in the following literature review, minority mobilization is viewed as a dynamic concept, especially with regard to language formation processes in Slovakia and Romania. Restriction and more controlling laws and policies are often considered as triggers to increased minority mobilization and participation. However, my hypothesis claims that *in spite of the openness of the Romanian policies in comparison with the Slovak one, the Hungarian minority in Romania is more active than in Slovakia.*

CHAPTER 1 – TOPIC OVERVIEW

1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The major works dedicated to this topic that the thesis focuses on from a theoretical point of view are *Ethnic Struggle, Coexistence, And Democratization in Eastern Europe* by Sherill Stroschein, *Talk Of The Nation: Language And Conflict in Romania and Slovakia* by Zsuzsa Csergo and *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox Of Minority Empowerment* by Erin K. Jenne.

According to Jenne's theory of ethnic bargaining and minority behavior in four states of the world, a non-repressive majority results in a 'State of Opportunity or 'State of Peace' of the minority. Since the relationship of Hungary's government to the Hungarian minority in Romania is rather supportive, as discussed further on in the thesis, this theory fits the case of Romania: the Hungarian minority finds itself in a 'State of Opportunity'. Nevertheless, the situation in Slovakia is different. While the lobby actor (Hungary) is supportive too, the majority is rather repressive. In Jenne's theory, this would result in a 'State of Conflict', where the minority radicalizes, and risks inter-ethnic conflict.³ However, as the research in this thesis indicates, Slovakia rather resembles a 'State of Vulnerability', where the minority accommodates suffering repression. This theoretical framework is applied to Section 3.3, discussing the effects of government restrictiveness and host-kin relations on minority activism.

Stroschein's text also focuses on the importance of protest and contention and the ability of ethnic Hungarians to achieve policy results in spite of their small political representation.⁴ The author also points out the role of ethnic contention in the gradual moderation of demands of the minority. Stroschein claims that regular protests make the groups familiar with their demands and

³ Jenne, Erin K. *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007. 43, Figure 2.4. Print.

⁴ Stroschein, Sherrill. *Ethnic Struggle, Coexistence, and Democratization in Eastern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. 3. Print.

provide a basis for regular interactions, allowing the creation of common institutions.⁵ This view could serve as a partial explanation of the differing effects of language policies on the two minorities. The book also presents several examples and cases of disputes over language and education in Romania as well as Slovakia, since the author believes that language is a trigger for different forms of mobilization.

Finally, Csergo's work provides an in-depth study of language with regards to sovereignty, international integration, cultural reproduction and its use in the official domain. The text follows the language debate in Romania and Slovakia through their democratization, accession into the European Union, the role of external actors and relationships with the kin state, Hungary. The author comes to an optimistic conclusion that the strong commitment to the democratic process helps the political elites to create possibilities for cooperation that overlooks cultural clashes and creates common grounds even on highly contested arguments.⁶

Although all three above mentioned texts concentrate on the Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia, this thesis is a contribution to the debate because of the particularity of its focus. Stroschein and Jenne center their debates mainly on the importance of minority mobilization and the reasons behind it with a strong emphasis on external influence, while Csergo outlines the significance of internal democratic processes. This thesis takes these debates into consideration, while shifting the focus on minority behavior and specific influences of language policies, rather than concentrating solely on internal or external processes. It highlights the ways in which governmental policies and the environment the minorities live in affect the minorities through observing education, language use and their activism. The particularity of its focus is also its time frame – although the information includes developments in the last 20 years, the primary aim of this research is to assess the current situation, using up to date data. Most

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Csergo, Zsuzsa. *Talk of the Nation: Language and Conflict in Romania and Slovakia*. Cornell UP, 2007. 22. Print.

research in this field concentrates on pre- or post-EU accession periods of time, indicating a clear gap in current research. The thesis also provides an innovative way of looking at the issue, since its hypothesis partially rejects the views held by the above-mentioned authors.

The scope of this research has global relevance as well - minority issues are a phenomenon relevant to many countries all over the world. It is also important to consider that both Romania and Slovakia (and Hungary for that matter) are members of the European Union and are signatories of the EU Protection of Minorities' Rights law, and yet, some problems remain to be unresolved. It is interesting to analyze how rifts in the society and within and between governments are still present, even with functional supranational legislature.

1.2 OUTLINE OF THE CASES

Slovakia and Romania serve as ideal comparative case studies for various reasons. The first and most obvious one being that their populations have the highest percentage of Hungarian minorities. They are also the only countries where the Hungarian minority plays a political role at a national level. In Ukraine and Serbia, for example, where significant Hungarian minority populations can be found as well, their political role is only at a regional level. Slovakia and Romania also share similar levels of economic development, the legacy of shifting from totalitarian to democratic regimes and subsequent rapid economic and political reforms.

After the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, which defined Hungary's borders, a significant part of the Hungarian population suddenly found itself landlocked from its own home and became a minority living in a different country, suffering the consequences. Hungary's area was reduced from 325,411 square kilometers to 93,073 square kilometers and its population from 20.9 million to 7.6 million.⁷ Slovak Hungarians experienced what is now known as "Slovakization", while

⁷ "Treaty of Peace Between The Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary." *Istrianet*. Web. 26 Apr. 2015. <http://www.istrianet.org/istria/history/1800-present/ww1/1920_treaty-hungary.pdf>.

Romanian Hungarians similarly experienced “Romanization”, which was aimed at eliminating the Magyar nationality.

The Hungarian minority in Romania is the largest ethnic minority in Romania, with a population of 1,227,623 people, which makes up 6.5 percent of the country’s total population.⁸ The part where most ethnic Hungarians reside today is known as Transylvania, with Hungarians forming 18.9 percent of the population. The Hungarian minority in Slovakia is also the largest ethnic minority in Slovakia, where Hungarians add up to 9.4 percent of the population (509,714 people).⁹ Almost a century after the Treaty of Trianon, the consequences are still present and tangible and the governments of both Romania as well as Slovakia are struggling to eliminate them.

The minority in both countries faces various challenges, ranging from still present forms of discrimination to frequent diplomatic tensions and laws considered to be directed against the minorities. Even though both Slovakia and Romania signed the European laws for protecting minorities’ rights, the implementation has not proved satisfactory to all members of the Hungarian community. Although both countries have a political representation in the form of Hungarian political parties in the parliament, there are still movements for an increase in autonomy and distinct cultural development.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Census: Fewer Hungarians, Catholics – and Slovaks." *Spectator.sme.sk*. Web. 28 Apr. 2015. <<http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20042646/census-fewer-hungarians-catholics-and-slovaks.html>>.

CHAPTER 2 – COUNTRY SPECIFICS

2.1 MINORITY SITUATION IN ROMANIA

2.1.1 Historical context and political situation

After the fall of the Ceausescu regime in Romania in 1989, the National Salvation Front (NSF) that set up a new government and became the leader, vowed to ensure “collective and individual rights and freedom for ethnic minorities.”¹⁰ It is important to note that 14 Hungarians were a part of this movement too.¹¹ Ceausescu’s attitudes towards minorities were condemned and a Ministry for minorities was promised. The sense of unity amongst the population was high as the victory of toppling the regime was celebrated throughout the country. The role of Hungary in these times was crucial for Romania, as it provided diplomatic and financial help to the entire population, regardless of their ethnicity. A close relationship between the NSF and the Hungarian government was established.

Issues of language and education were brought up almost immediately after the coup and the consequent clashes occurred, as some demands made by ethnic Hungarians were deemed secessionist.¹² A violent conflict in 1990 in the city of Târgu Mureş is only one of the examples of the clashes that took place in Romania. The Romanian constitution of 1991 indicated some positive developments in minority issues, but Hungarians still lacked a law on education in their mother tongue, one of their most important demands.¹³

In the years immediately following the coup d’état, Romania experienced an increasing rise of

¹⁰ Jenne, Erin K. *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007. 109. Print.

¹¹ Milenkovic, Milan. "Question of Hungarian Minority in Post-communist Slovakia and Romania in the Light of Euro-Atlantic Integration: Comparative Analysis." Milan D Milenkovic Blog. 3 May 2013. Web. 4 May 2015.

¹² "Struggling For Ethnic Identity - Ethnic Hungarians in Post-Ceausescu Romania." Human Rights Watch. Helsinki Watch. p. 17. Web. 27 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/Romania93O.pdf>>.

¹³ Milenkovic, Milan. "Question of Hungarian Minority in Post-communist Slovakia and Romania in the Light of Euro-Atlantic Integration: Comparative Analysis." Milan D Milenkovic Blog. 3 May 2013. Web. 4 May 2015.

nationalism in the political, but also public sphere. Almost 20% of all votes in the elections were gained by openly nationalistic parties – Greater Romania Party, Romanian Party of National Unity and Social Labor Party.¹⁴ Nationalist politicians created dissatisfaction amongst the minority as they often faced even more repression than during the previous regime.¹⁵ Helsinki Watch reported several instances of repressive measures taken by the government, like forbidding advertisements in Hungarian language, openly exposing nationalistic views in newspapers, allowing archeological diggings beneath Hungarian national monuments, assigning Romanian prefects in regions with a mostly Hungarian population or altering a statue's inscription in Hungarian. In 1995, a Law on Education was passed, which caused further disagreements and disappointment, as it restricted the usage of Hungarian in various fields of education and completely abolished some subjects previously taught in Hungarian.¹⁶

During this period of time, Hungary's bilateral talks with Romania intensified and the kin state's demands and intervening became more aggressive – it refused to sign treaties without a side treaty on minority protection and threatened to veto the admission of Romania to the Council of Europe. In response, Romania blamed Hungary of interfering with its domestic affairs in order to regain the territory of Transylvania.¹⁷ The disputes continued in the next years without much change until the Council of Europe insisted on a settlement between the two governments. It was mainly due to Romania's eagerness to join the Council of Europe, European Union and NATO and the pressure from these organizations that the two parties managed to agree on a compromise. Subsequently, the leaders of the Democratic Allians of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) turned their demands away from autonomy and focused more on the improvement of

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Struggling For Ethnic Identity - Ethnic Hungarians in Post-Ceausescu Romania." Human Rights Watch. Helsinki Watch. p. 49. Web. 27 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/Romania93O.pdf>>.

¹⁶ Carey, Henry F. *Romania since 1989: Politics, Economics, and Society*. Lanham: Lexington, 2004. 249. Print.

¹⁷ Jenne, Erin K. *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007. 113-114. Print.

laws regarding minority language and education.¹⁸ RMDSZ also included matters concerning not only minority rights in its agenda and adopted policies on a wider array, like fiscal and monetary issues, taxation, privatization and EU and NATO integration.¹⁹ Cooperation within the government was at a high point during which Hungarians managed to reopen their consulate in Cluj, start talks about the establishment of a Hungarian university and amend the controversial linguistic and educational laws.

In 2000, the first splits in RMDSZ started to occur, as its radical members became dissatisfied with the constant political compromises they were forced to take with the government on behalf of the Hungarian minority. New rivaling organizations were established (Hungarian National Council of Transylvania - CMNT, Szekler National Council), turning back to pushing for territorial autonomy and other harsh demands.²⁰ Most of the radical goals were never achieved. RMDSZ brought autonomy talks back on the table again in 2004, aiming for cultural autonomy of minorities. Although a coalition agreement was signed, the law providing such autonomy was never adopted.²¹ A Hungarian university or a separate faculty at an existing university at Babes-Bolyai was not established either. The only achievement of the third round of government participation of RMDSZ was the altering of a law on local public governance, which allowed regions with Hungarian population even below 20% to keep their official language as Hungarian.²² A turning point came in 2009, which was the first year when RMDSZ became a part of the opposition. Although the position of the party was now weakened compared to the previous terms, positive developments for the Hungarian minority have been made nevertheless. Working groups have been formed with the fellow Hungarian parties, focusing on specific issues

¹⁸ Culic, Irina. *"Dilemmas of Belonging: Hungarians from Romania."* Nationalities Papers: 175-200. Print.

¹⁹ Jenne, Erin K. *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007. 117. Print.

²⁰ Bochsler, Daniel, and Edina Szöcsik. *"Building Inter-ethnic Bridges or Promoting Ethno-territorial Demarcation Lines? Hungarian Minority Parties in Competition."* Nationalities Papers (2013): 761-79. Print.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

like autonomy, education or language legislation, creating space for more effective discussions and demands. For the European Parliament elections, RMDSZ and CMNT ran with a joint list.²³ An amendment was made to the law on minority education, which finally permitted Hungarian departments to be opened at the Babes-Bolyai university²⁴, since it was now controlled by the government decree instead of the university senate.

As the demands of the main representative of Hungarians in Romania, RMDSZ, became less radical, more political agreements were achieved. It is important to note that since 1996, the RMDSZ backed every governmental coalition. Although the party often faced criticism for this, it brought further agreements and achievements to the party, which was not the case of Slovakia's Hungarian parties, as noted in the next sections. Currently, RMDSZ remains to be the major representative of Hungarians in Romania. However, it was not only the political representation of the minority that helped Romanian Hungarians to improve their situation. As explained in the following part, Hungary and its relationship with Romania played a crucial role too.

2.1.2 Kin-state relations

Due to the resentment and feeling of sentiment due to the lost territory in the Treaty of Trianon, any form of kin-state politics from Hungary creates international anxiety and attention. The 2001 Status Law, backed by almost 90% of Hungarian deputies votes, was considered a controversy in Romania as well as Slovakia.²⁵ Almost all parties in Hungary agreed on the need of the country to help their ethnic citizens living abroad, support the strengthening of their Hungarian culture and social and economic conditions. However, the question of what form of

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Bartunek, Istav. "*Chronology*." (Hungarian). RMDSZ. 2010. Web. 28 Apr. 2015. 352-353. <www.rmdsz.ro>.

²⁵ "*Kin-State Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungary*." Wilson Center. Web. 5 May 2015. <<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/315-kin-state-politics-central-and-eastern-europe-the-case-hungary>>.

help should be provided often causes disputes and opposing politicians use this issue to define themselves in contrast to the others.

After signing the bilateral treaty in 1996 with Hungary, most unresolved disagreements were settled and the relations overall became closer. Hungary became a major investor in Transylvania, with the total amount of trade between Hungary and Romania in 2012 adding up to 7.3 billion euro and Hungary being Romania's third largest trading partner.²⁶ In 2004, a proposal of granting Hungarian citizenship to Romanian Hungarians by RMDSZ was defeated at a referendum. However, an organization was set up that lobbied for preferential treatment of ethnic Hungarians and accelerated the citizenship process. In 2010, amendments were passed that made the procedure even simpler by, for example, waiving the requirement for residency in Hungary.²⁷ According to a research conducted by RMDSZ, over 85% of Hungarians living in Romania were willing to apply for a Hungarian citizenship.²⁸ In October that year, the president of Romania, Traian Basescu, claimed that he has no objections against Hungary's new law making it easier for Hungarians living abroad to obtain their citizenship.²⁹ This was an important step taken by the Romanian government, as the situation was quite different in Slovakia as explained further on in the thesis.

2.1.3 Language legislation and disputes

The official language status of Romania is regulated in the country's constitution, which was drafted in 1991 after the fall of the Soviet Union. Overall, the constitution suggests a strong commitment to protecting peoples' rights in several articles. In Article 6 - Right to identity: "The

²⁶ "Romania's Exports to Hungary Doubled in Four Years." (Romanian). Business24.ro. Web. 2 May 2015. <<http://www.business24.ro/macroeconomie/exporturi/exporturile-romaniei-catre-ungaria-s-au-dublat-in-ultimii-patru-ani-dar-roman-la-jumatatea-importurilor-1532009>>.

²⁷ Kovacs, Maria, and Judit Toth. *Country Report: Hungary*. EUDO Citizenship Observatory, 2013. 1-7. Print.

²⁸ "Ethnic Hungarians in Romania Keen to Get Hungarian Passport." Web. 2 May 2015. <<https://euobserver.com/news/30151>>.

²⁹ "Romania Backs Hungarian Citizenship Law - EU." Web. 5 May 2015. <<http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/romania-hungary.6kp>>.

State recognizes and guarantees the right of persons belonging to national minorities, to the preservation, development and expression of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity.”³⁰ Article 13 talks specifically about language and explicitly states that Romanian is the sole official language, raising it above Hungarian or other minority languages, as the government is yet to enact a legislation specifically for minority languages: “In Romania, the official language is Romanian.”³¹ Article 30, also linked to language, ensures the: “Freedom of expression of thoughts, opinions, or beliefs, and freedom of any creation, by words, in writing, in pictures, by sounds or other means of communication in public are inviolable. In addition, any censorship shall be prohibited”.³² The constitution’s Article 37 also contents the free association into political parties and organizations. With regards to language specifically, a Minority Act was proposed in 1993 and is yet to be implemented. Its adoption was also one of the soft conditions of EU accession and has been constantly recommended and stressed in the EU and the European Parliament’s resolutions.³³ Nevertheless, it is up to the will of the ruling political parties and not in the competence of the EU to enforce the implementation of the Minority Act, which is held in the web of the Romanian legislature up until today.³⁴

Language disputes of Romanians and Hungarians are common in Romania, as the minority believes that preserving their language is essential for maintaining their culture and identity.³⁵ Disputes have often revolved around the language of public signs and the official language in public domains. After a violent ethnic clashes that occurred in Targu Mures between Hungarians and Romanians in 1999, some street and public signs in Hungarian have disappeared. The

³⁰ *Constitution of Romania, 1991*. 2nd ed. Bucharest: "Monitorul Oficial", 1995. Print.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ "Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly - Opinion No. 176 (1993) on the Application by Romania for Membership of the Council of Europe." *Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly*. Web. 2 May 2015. <<https://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/adoptedtext/ta93/eopi176.htm>>.Source:

³⁴ Eplenyi, Kata. *The Language Rights Of Hungarian Communities In Slovakia And Romania: The Impacts And Perspectives Of EU-Membership*. MA Thesis. Central European University, Budapest, 2009.

³⁵ Stroschein, Sherrill. *Ethnic Struggle, Coexistence, and Democratization in Eastern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. 161. Print.

situation intensified in the city of Cluj, where a Romanian nationalist Funar became mayor and ordered Hungarian signs to be taken off even from Hungarian middle schools, claiming he was trying to uphold the law of the national language.³⁶ Funar continued to repress Hungarian language on public signs, including signs in the Opera, festivals and various location signs. In 1997, the president issued an ordinance allowing for bilingual signs in regions with a minority population over 20%.³⁷ Although this ordinance did not require for a confirmation by the local council, the city of Cluj managed to delay the process of installing bilingual signs for quite some time. Some signs that had managed to be installed across Romania had been vandalized. In addition, the mayor of Cluj declared that all employees of the city should pass a Romanian language exam.³⁸ Although the ordinance was defeated by the Senate the following year, a law was passed that allowed minorities to communicate with local authorities in their mother language, given that the minority makes up 20% of the population.³⁹

Minority education and its language is a point of controversy for Hungarians in Romania as well. A law is lacking for the permission of teaching Romanian as a foreign language in Hungarian schools, which makes it extremely difficult for the teachers as well as students. If a student does not speak any Romanian at home, which is a likely possibility in regions with a mostly Hungarian population, teaching Romanian as a first language to them is not effective. Currently, this is being solved by teaching subjects like history or geography in Romanian as an attempt to improve the students' language skills, which affects the students' knowledge in the language as well as the subject.⁴⁰ An alternative curriculum to truly solve this issue has been created by language and education experts, but has not yet been approved for implementation by

³⁶ Ibid,162.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸Ibid, 163.

³⁹ Ibid, 164.

⁴⁰ Eplenyi, Kata. *The Language Rights Of Hungarian Communities In Slovakia And Romania: The Impacts And Perspectives Of EU-Membership*. MA Thesis. 57. Central European University, Budapest, 2009.

the government.⁴¹

Another problem with minority education yet to be solved is the establishment of a state financed, exclusively Hungarian university in Cluj, which was closed shortly before Romania's accession to the EU due to a scandal in the board of the Bolyai University.⁴² The Romanian side argues that the university currently in operation meets all the multicultural requirements and thus there is no need for the establishment of a specifically Hungarian university. A Romanian EU Commissioner in charge of multiculturalism had also claimed and refused the reestablishment of the university would negatively affect the population, as it would separate Europeans.⁴³ On the other side, the Hungarian representatives argued that it is inscribed in international and European law that everyone has the right for higher education.

Analyzing language rights in the public and local domain, overall, positive developments had been made in Romania during and after the accession to the EU. A gradual shift was marked from limited toleration of minority language use to a more protective conception of language policies.⁴⁴ Consequently, the state had a duty to protect minority languages and their culture and although in practice, Hungarian in Romania never gained full or partial official status, there were specific situations in public and local domain under which members of the national minority were able to speak their mother language.⁴⁵ With regards to local public administration, Hungarians are able to address the authorities in Hungarian and will "receive an answer both in Romanian and in their mother tongue".⁴⁶ Furthermore, public signs of local authorities and public announcements should use the minority language as well. A Law on the Statue of Public

⁴¹ Ibid, 58.

⁴² "Declaration of Hungary." (Romanian). *European Commission*. Web. 1 May 2015.
<http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/orban/news/docs/press_release/070718_maghiari/declaratie%20maghiari_EN.pdf>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Schwellnuss, Guido, and Lilla Balazs. "Decoupled Empowerment: Minority Representation and the Implementation of Language Rights in Romania." *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*: 117. Print.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p 117

⁴⁶ "Article 76-5." *Constitution of Romania, 1991*. 2nd ed. Bucharest: "Monitorul Oficial", 1995. Print.

Functionaries also claims that in regions with a minority population of over 20%, some of the employees that come into direct contact with the citizens should be able to speak the respective minority language to ensure effective communication.⁴⁷ This legislative framework is also reinforced at an international level by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe, which was ratified by Romania in 2008. Also, thanks to RMDSZ activism, bilingual signs are present in regions with Hungarians as a majority. According to Balazs and Scwellnus⁴⁸, the commitment to implementing such strategies greatly varies depending on whether or not Hungarians are a minority in the region.

In 2002, the Minority Protection office was set up in Romania, which serves as an anti-discrimination council. It was initiated by RMDSZ and was formally passed by the government too, with law instructing that: "any person who is the victim of any form of discrimination can turn to the Minority Protection Office, and that body can also launch an investigation of its own."⁴⁹ A National Council for Combating Discrimination was also set up, which reports to the Prime Minister and its agenda includes "protecting ... disadvantaged persons and groups that experience inequality compared to the majority of citizens"; proposing and endorsing equal-rights legislation; cooperating with government bodies as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure equality; monitoring the application of legislation; receiving petitions and complaints on discrimination; conducting and publishing studies on the subject; and assessing and sanctioning violations."⁵⁰ After a year of its establishment in 2003, 35 cases of discrimination were sanctioned or fined, 15 investigations on discrimination were conducted and overall, over 400 complaints and petitions were received.⁵¹ The same year, Regular Report on Romania's

⁴⁷ "Article 76-3." *Constitution of Romania, 1991*. 2nd ed. Bucharest: "Monitorul Oficial", 1995. Print.

⁴⁸ Schwellnuss, Guido, and Lilla Balazs. "Decoupled Empowerment: Minority Representation and the Implementation of Language Rights in Romania." *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*: 117. Print.

⁴⁹ "Refworld | Romania: Ethnic Hungarians (January 2001 - January 2006)." *Refworld*. Web. 6 May 2015. <<http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=47de378f1a>>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "Seminar National Specialised Bodies 2003." *Council of Europe*. Web. 3 May 2015.

Progress Towards Accession to the European Union described ethnic Hungarians as well integrated into the Romanian society.⁵²

Despite the disputes, lack of legislature in some areas and various discriminatory instances in Romania, the country is considered an example of ethnic diversity in the Balkan area.⁵³ President Clinton referred to Romania as a state that “has built a democracy respecting the rights of ethnic minorities.”⁵⁴

2.2 MINORITY SITUATION IN SLOVAKIA

2.2.1 Historical context and political situation

One of the oldest organizations in Slovakia representing the Hungarian minority was CSEMADOK – Czechoslovak Hungarian Worker’s Cultural Association, which mainly dealt with culture, but its importance and meaning expanded during the Prague Spring of 1968.⁵⁵ As the political opposition amongst Slovak Hungarians against communism grew, the Czechoslovak Hungarian Minority Rights Committee was established in 1978, which fought for minority rights, but also a democratic transition.⁵⁶ As soon as the Communist regime fell, the Hungarian minority mobilized just like the Slovak majority. Three major Hungarian political parties and two minor ones were formed soon after the 1989 ‘Velvet Revolution’. Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (MKDH) and Coexistence (Spolužitie), which emerged from CSEMADOK, ran jointly in the elections of 1990 and became members of the opposition.

<http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/07-Seminar_national_specialised_bodies_2003/NSBR2003_Interview_Jura_en.asp>.

⁵² "Refworld | Romania: Ethnic Hungarians (January 2001 - January 2006)." *Refworld*. Web. 6 May 2015. <<http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=47de378f1a>>.

⁵³ "Refworld | Romania: Ethnic Hungarians (January 2001 - January 2006)." *Refworld*. Web. 2 May 2015. <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/47de378f1a.html>>.

⁵⁴ Gallagher, Tom. *Modern Romania: The End of Communism, the Failure of Democratic Reform, and the Theft of a Nation*. New York: New York UP, 2005. 216. Print.

⁵⁵ Bochsler, Daniel, and Edina Szöcsik. "Building Inter-ethnic Bridges or Promoting Ethno-territorial Demarcation Lines? Hungarian Minority Parties in Competition." *Nationalities Papers* (2013): 771. Print.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

Before a further analysis of the political context and parties, it is crucial to take into consideration the split of Czechoslovakia, which was a pivotal event for the Hungarian minority just as it was for Slovaks. Most Slovak Hungarians did not agree with the split, as the federal government in Prague was seen as a guarantee for the rights of ethnic minorities.⁵⁷ Also, the wording of the new independent Slovak constitution was heavily focusing on the Slovak nation and Slovaks, with little attention given to the minorities living in Slovakia. Already the first phrase sets the tone of this: “We the Slovak people...” Breaking away from Czechoslovakia and emerging as an independent nation, it was natural that the government strived for shaping an independent Slovak identity. However, as the Hungarian minority experienced, this gave a rise to nationalism within the government and amongst the citizens as well. Even though the constitution did include articles on the protection of minorities, the government seemed to act as if this was not the case. The Transportation Minister Hofbauer ordered all Hungarian road signs to be taken off and funding to Hungarian cultural institutions like CSEMADOK was close to being frozen.⁵⁸

In the meantime, some Hungarian parties were demanding collective rights while Coexistence, the most radical side, was calling for territorial and cultural autonomy as well. Coexistence also proposed a draft law for setting up a public state-funded Hungarian university, but this was, similarly to other proposals, rejected by the government. In 1995, a language law was passed that forbade communication in Hungarian in any public administration areas, demonstrating that the government largely overlooked the demands of the Hungarian minority.⁵⁹

By 1998, all minority parties merged into one – SMK, Party of the Hungarian Coalition – which proved to be a step forward for ethnic Hungarians. Although the party’s participation in

⁵⁷ Jenne, Erin K. *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007. 110. Print.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Bochsler, Daniel, and Edina Szöcsik. "Building Inter-ethnic Bridges or Promoting Ethno-territorial Demarcation Lines? Hungarian Minority Parties in Competition." *Nationalities Papers* (2013): 772. Print.

the parliament was conditional (demands for territorial autonomy and the abolishment of the Beneš decrees had to be dropped), they were able to push for a reform in administration to facilitate everyday life of the minority and work towards enhancing education in Hungarian.⁶⁰ However, the implementation of the party's agenda was lengthy and full of obstacles due to the reluctance of the government and the conditions for EU accession that Slovakia was working towards. Since one of the requirements was a language law and an administrative reform for the minorities, SMK and the rest of the parliament were forced to agree on a compromise, which resulted in stepping away from some of their claims (e.g. agreeing to a 20% minority threshold instead of 10%, regarding enabling the use of Hungarian in public administration).⁶¹ In the next government term, SMK again failed to implement an administrative reform, which would help toward territorial autonomy and the abolishment of Beneš decrees. Nevertheless, an independent Hungarian university was founded in Komárno, which is considered a major success of SMK until today.

In 2006, a new parliament was formed, with SNS, Slovak Nationalist Party, in the coalition. Its leader, Ján Slota, is publicly known for his extremist views and his openly negative opinion on the Hungarian minority of Slovakia. One of his infamous quotes includes: "The Hungarians are a cancer in the body of the Slovak nation."⁶² SMK was facing disputes within its structure, which resulted in the replacement of Béla Bugár as its president by Pál Csáky.⁶³ Csáky criticized Bugár on various occasions, mainly condemning his accommodative attitudes towards the parliament regarding issues that SMK was trying to tackle. Subsequently, SMK once again demanded for the abolishment of Beneš decrees and the establishment of a territorial autonomy, two highly

⁶⁰ Hamberger, Judit. Party of the Hungarian Coalition in the Government." (Slovak). *Madari.sk*. Web. 5 May 2015. <<http://madari.sk/publikacie/judit-hamberger-strana-madarskej-koalicie-v-slovenskej-vlade>>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² "Jan Slota Public Statements." *Hungarian Human Rights EU*. Web. 5 May 2015. <[http://www.hungarian-human-rights.eu/Jan Slota public statements.pdf](http://www.hungarian-human-rights.eu/Jan%20Slota%20public%20statements.pdf)>.

⁶³ "Pal Csaky Becomes Head of SMK." (Slovak). *HNOnline*. Web. 5 May 2015. <<http://hn.hnonline.sk/ekonomika-a-firmy-117/predsedom-smk-sa-stal-pal-csaky-230250/>>.

controversial issues. This caused much criticism internally as well as externally, with much media attention. Opinions of the Hungarian party as ‘radical’ and ‘extremist’ emerged.⁶⁴ Bringing these problems to the surface backfired at SMK and the entire Hungarian minority, as the government attempted to outweigh them by creating countering legislature regarding language use and the decrees.

Amidst the controversial claims and difficult internal situation of the party, the former leader, Bugár, along with some colleagues left SMK and created a new party, Most-Híd (meaning “bridge” in Hungarian and Slovak, a symbolic name for the cooperation between Slovaks and Hungarians).⁶⁵ Bugár’s new party presented Slovakia as a multi-lingual, multi-national and multi-cultural state and aimed to represent all minorities, not only Hungarians. Its main requests include calls for a modification of Slovakia’s language law, the implementation of an extensive status law for minorities and a reconciliation process between Slovakia and Hungary,⁶⁶ as a response to the disagreements that arose after Hungary’s offer for citizenship to ethnic Hungarian. SMK called Most- Híd a traitor of the Hungarian minority for not focusing solely on issues concerning them and rather presenting a full-scale political program touching upon various other problems of Slovakia.⁶⁷

Currently, Most-Híd is a member of the opposition, while SMK does not have a representation in the parliament. However, SMK has 2 members in the European Parliament, while Most-Híd only has 1. In recent times, SMK has also refrained from bringing up controversial issues like the Beneš decrees or calls for autonomy.

⁶⁴ "Csáky Opens Beneš Decrees." (Slovak). *Www.sme.sk*. Web. 7 May 2015. <<http://www.sme.sk/c/3426228/csaky-otvara-benesove-dekrety.html>>.

⁶⁵ "ELECTIONS: Bugár Continues in National Council With New Party Most-Híd." (Slovak). *Aktuality.sk*. Web. 7 May 2015. <<http://m.aktuality.sk/clanok/165814/volby-bugar-pokracuje-v-nr-sr-s-novou-stranou-most-hid/?nomobile=1>>.

⁶⁶ Bochsler, Daniel, and Edina Szöcsik. "Building Inter-ethnic Bridges or Promoting Ethno-territorial Demarcation Lines? Hungarian Minority Parties in Competition." *Nationalities Papers* (2013): 774. Print.

⁶⁷ "Bugár: SMK Directed a Dirty Campaign Against Me. No Collaboration Planned." (Slovak). *Pravda.sk*. Web. 5 May 2015. <<http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/341227-bugar-smk-viedla-proti-mne-spinavu-kampan-o-spolupraci-zatial-neuvazuje/>>.

2.2.2 Kin-state relations

Despite various disputes, disagreements and unresolved issues between Hungary and Slovakia, the current situation between the two countries seems to be at a stalemate. The Prime Ministers of the respective countries, Viktor Orbán and Róbert Fico, are avoiding discussing controversial topics that have previously caused tension between the governments, populations, and minorities and majorities. Although dual citizenship, language laws and the amount of financial support for the development of minority culture are subjects to further dialogue, the leaders tend to ignore them. The situation is similar with the scandalous case of Hedviga Malinová⁶⁸, even though Malinová was granted a Hungarian citizenship, the leaders of the respective governments have not commented on the developments of the event in recent times. According to Béla Bugár, the leader of the political party Most-Híd, Fico and Orbán claim that this ‘peaceful’ situation allows for enhanced support and financial help for ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia.⁶⁹ However, he also notes that several projects have been stalled or are behind schedule, like the bridges on Ipel’ and in Komárno⁷⁰ that were initiated by the Hungarian government.

Another factor that affects the minority is that the Hungarian government openly supports and debates with SMK, but not with Most-Híd. Orbán justifies this by noting that Most-Híd is not a party purely representing ethnic Hungarians and it “never was a Hungarian party”, as it has a full-scale political program focusing on all minorities, as well as various other socio-economic issues.⁷¹ Even though such argumentation is true, since Most-Híd has a representation in the parliament while SMK does not, Hungary’s lack of support in Bugár’s party hinders further

⁶⁸ Hedviga Malinová, an ethnic Hungarian from Slovakia, had claimed to be beaten on her way to university, because she was talking to someone in Hungarian. The incident happened in 2006 and the case is still not closed.

⁶⁹ Bugár, Béla. Personal interview. 26 Apr. 2015.

⁷⁰ "Waiting for Orbán." (Slovak). *tyždeň*. Web. 5 May 2015.
<<http://www.tyzden.sk/casopis/2010/8/cakanie-na-orbana.html>>.

⁷¹ "Orbán Supports Csáky in Elections." (Slovak). *Cas.sk*. Web. 9 May 2015.
<<http://www.cas.sk/clanok/168528/orban-vyjadril-csakymu-podporu-vo-volbach.html>>.

developments for the minority. As stated by Péter Balázs, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, “In Slovakia, the Hungarian government ignores Most- Híd and focuses on SMK, saying that it is not a pure Hungarian party. It would be much easier for everybody if there was just one party representing the Hungarian minority.”⁷² In relation to this, Béla Bugár claims that: “Each Hungarian government selects its chosen ones, whether in Romania or in Slovakia. In Slovakia, it is SMK, while Most-Híd is largely overlooked. Every year, SMK representatives meet Orbán to discuss their standing and what could help them in the long-term, mainly speaking in terms of material help. Most-Híd is not a part of these meetings.”⁷³

One of the most major standoffs of the Hungarian and Slovak governments was after Hungary’s offer of citizenships to diasporic and kin minorities living abroad. According to Balázs, it was an offering of a gift without creating the necessary conditions for it, which was a “terrible mistake”.⁷⁴ The reaction of Slovakia was to ban dual citizenships, forcing citizens to choose and consequently lose one. Although an amendment to this law is valid since February 2015, it is subject to several conditions and special circumstances in order for it to be effective.⁷⁵ In present times, this is one of the many matters that are not on the agendas for discussion between the Slovak and Hungarian governments.

However, disregarding the internal problems of Slovakia’s government policies and the Hungarian minority political representation, the relations with Hungary have improved much over the past years. Although some issues remain to be unresolved, the tensions have faded and the two countries are enjoying a seemingly calm, friendly era. Hungary’s carefully selected allies in the political field could be viewed as discriminatory, especially in Most-Híd’s point of view, but it remains to support its Hungarian population living abroad.

⁷² Balázs, Péter. Personal interview. 29 Apr. 2015.

⁷³ Bugár, Béla. Personal interview. 26 Apr. 2015.

⁷⁴ Balázs, Péter. Personal interview. 29 Apr. 2015.

⁷⁵ <http://www.sme.sk/c/7620868/slovenske-obciansstvo-oddnes-na-zaklade-vynimiek-vracaju.html>

2.2.3 Language legislation and disputes

The Slovak Constitution includes two articles relevant to language legislation. Article 6 states that Slovak is the only state language on the territory of the country and should a different language be used in contact with officials, a specific law must allow for it.⁷⁶ Article 32 declares that the part of the population belonging to an ethnic minority must be able to receive or disseminate information in their mother tongue. This article includes the “acquiring of the state language, education and official communication.”⁷⁷ Nonetheless, there are conditions to this too. Since the article also states that the abovementioned cannot lead to “the threat of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Slovak Republic, and to the discrimination of other populations,” in a sense it is restrictive for the minority language. The way these articles are expressed communicates a message that the minority may exercise the right to use their mother tongue, but may be subjected to the interests of the majority. It also implies that the use of minority language could propose a threat to the Slovak nation.⁷⁸ Additionally, the opening phrase of the Constitution: “We the Slovak nation...” was supposed to be formulated as “We the citizens of Slovakia...” which would be more considerate of the minorities. This proposal was, however, rejected by the parliament.⁷⁹

One of the most important language policies in Slovakia is the State language law of 1995, which was amended in years 2009 and 2011. The law declares that “the Slovak language is the most important feature of the individuality of the Slovak nation, the most precious value of its cultural heritage and expression of the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic, and the universal communication means of its citizens, which ensures their freedom and equality in dignity and

⁷⁶ *The Constitution of the Slovak Republic*. Bratislava: PRESSFOTO, the Pub. House of the Agency of the Slovak Republic, 1993. Print.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Menichova, Martina. *Nation-Building Through Language And Its Implications For Minorities: Case Study Of Hungarians In Slovakia*. MA Thesis. 31. Central European University, Budapest, 2014.

⁷⁹ Nedelsky, Nadya. "Constitutional Nationalism's Implications for Minority Rights and Democratization: The Case of Slovakia." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*: 109. Web. 9 May 2015.

rights on the territory of the Slovak Republic.”⁸⁰ This quote clearly indicates the significance that is given to language in the country as well as its direct linkage to sovereignty. It also infers that the ability to speak Slovak ensures the citizens’ freedom and equality, giving the language substantial meaning. Further observation of the law signifies that Slovak language has a priority over other languages that might be practiced in the country. It also establishes the communication in the official sphere, like the military, public administration, education etc., to be Slovak. An exception is given to members of a national minority that must abide to the Law on the use of minority languages.⁸¹

The amendment to the law in 2009 brought immense internal and external media attention. It was criticized by the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, the Hungarian government, but also various international and civil organizations. During this time, the relations between Slovakia and Hungary were said to be at one of their lowest points.⁸² The law points out specific situations during which communication must be conducted in the state language, for example in state hospitals, in spoken and written form.⁸³ Taking into consideration the fact that several towns in Slovakia have a Hungarian population of over 75% and a portion of the people are likely to speak little or no Slovak, such amendment is extremely restrictive not only in theory, but in every day life too. One of the most controversial points of the 2009 amendment is the issuing of financial penalties to those who fail to obey this law, which could add up to 5000 euros. A member of Most-Híd, Ondrej Dostál, attempted to cancel these sanctions in the 2011 amendment, but his

⁸⁰ "270/1995." *KB Design*. Web. 3 May 2015.

<[http://www.kbdesign.sk/cla/projects/language_policy/legislation/Law on the State Language of SR.htm](http://www.kbdesign.sk/cla/projects/language_policy/legislation/Law%20on%20the%20State%20Language%20of%20SR.htm)>.

⁸¹ Menichova, Martina. *Nation-Building Through Language And Its Implications For Minorities: Case Study Of Hungarians In Slovakia*. MA Thesis. 33. Central European University, Budapest, 2014.

⁸² "Protests over Slovak Language Law." *BBC News*. Web. 9 May 2015.

<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8232878.stm>>.

⁸³ "Maďarič: Doctors Will Not Be Fined For Breaking The Language Law." (Slovak) *Pravda.sk*. Web. 10 May 2015. <<http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/162109-madaric-lekari-nedostanu-pokuty-za-porusenie-jazykoveho-zakona/>>.

proposal was not passed.⁸⁴ Opponents of the law have described this step as criminalizing the use of Hungarian.⁸⁵ Péter Balázs had compared the situation in Slovakia to Ceasescu's regime and attitude to Hungarian Romanians and identified it as "unacceptable". He also commented on Fico's populism, saying that "he is unfortunately trying to get popularity by cheap means."⁸⁶ According to various observers, this act was a part of a political game and the Hungarian parliament agreed on a declaration aiming to cancel the legislation in Slovakia. The European Union and the OSCE were also amongst the critics of the 2009 law. Kálmán Petőcz, a member of FORUMINST, an independent institute for the research of minorities in Slovakia, said that the law "could be seen as an expression of the superiority of Slovaks over all other nationalities in Slovakia."⁸⁸

In 2011, Most-Híd managed to amend the controversial law again, although only a fraction of their initial proposal was passed. One of the passed amendments is the change in the percentage of minority, regarding the ability to use minority language in official contact – the 2009 amendment's margin was at 20%, while the 2011 only requires a 15% minority population. However, this change will be only be in effect from 2021.⁸⁹ Bugár's intention was also to allow city councils to hold their meetings in the minority language if all the representatives agree on the language beforehand. However, the final version states that the mayor must give his approval as

⁸⁴ "New Language Law Passed: Fico's Party Disagrees!" (Slovak). *Cas.sk*. Web. 7 May 2015. <<http://www.cas.sk/clanok/198865/novela-jazykoveho-zakona-presla-ficovci-ju-vypiskali.html>>.

⁸⁵ "Hovorte Po Slovensky!*" *Economist*. Web. 9 May 2015. <<http://www.economist.com/node/14140437>>.

⁸⁶ "Slovakia Shoots Itself Own Goal." (German). *Die Presse*. Web. 10 May 2015. <http://www.diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/505751/Balazs_Slowakei-hat-sich-Eigentor-geschossen>.

⁸⁷ "Balázs Péter Hung the Slovaks." (Hungarian). *Index*. Web. 7 May 2015. <http://index.hu/kulfold/2009/09/17/kiakasztotta_a_szlovakokat_balazs_peter/>.

⁸⁸ "EUROPE: Not the Language to Speak." *Global Issues*. Web. 7 May 2015. <<http://www.globalissues.org/news/2009/07/19/2232>>.

⁸⁹ "New Language Law Passed: Fico's Party Disagrees!" (Slovak). *Cas.sk*. Web. 7 May 2015. <<http://www.cas.sk/clanok/198865/novela-jazykoveho-zakona-presla-ficovci-ju-vypiskali.html>>.

well.⁹⁰ As a part of the amendment, medical institutes are no longer required to provide a translator or a member of the staff who speaks the minority language.

According to linguist and professor Juraj Dolník, the language legislation in Slovakia is pointless and unnecessarily harming, as social life in ethnically mixed cities went on without major problems or disputes that would have to be solved with legislation.⁹¹ Moreover, the legislation that was created affects members of the minority at a very sensitive place – it challenges their ability to coexist peacefully and express language tolerance towards the members of the majority and the state language, despite the fact that research had previously shown normal coexistence.⁹² Dolník also argues that in the preparatory phase of the law, there was no qualified professional research or analysis conducted to determine whether or not such legislation was even needed. Although the law caused some demonstrations⁹³, it mainly created emotional antipathy, instead of creating a positive environment and attitude towards the Slovak language amongst the Hungarian minority.

Overall, language disputes in Slovakia revolve around two paradigms. Hungarians see the right to use Hungarian as essential for the preservation of their identity, which is challenged due to their minority status in Slovakia. As intermarriage between Slovaks and Hungarians is common in Slovakia and tends to be higher than in Romania,⁹⁴ the debate also centers on whether children should attend Slovak or Hungarian schools. While Hungarians criticize Slovaks for assimilating

⁹⁰ "Budapest Criticizes the New Slovak Language Law." (Slovak). *Pravda.sk*. Web. 13 May 2015. <<http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/170550-budapest-kritizuje-novelu-slovenskeho-jazykoveho-zakona/>>.

⁹¹ "Language Legislation Affects Hungarians At a Sensitive Spot." (Slovak). *Pravda.sk*. Web. 7 May 2015. <<http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/162728-jazykovy-zakon-zasahuje-madarov-na-citlivom-mieste-tvrdi-jazykovedec/>>.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ On September 1, 2011, around 6,000 people gathered in Dunajská Streda to protest against the language law, claiming that they did not protest against Slovaks in general, but rather tried to bring attention to the lack of rights of the minority.

⁹⁴ This is due to Romania's religious background, where the Romanian citizens are either Orthodox or Greek Catholic, while the Hungarians are Catholic or Protestant, not allowing cross-cutting cleavages. Stroschein, Sherrill. *Ethnic Struggle, Coexistence, and Democratization in Eastern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. 3. Print.

them by decreasing the opportunities for them to speak in their mother tongue, Slovaks accuse Hungarians of forcing them to speak Hungarian in southern regions of Slovakia.

2.3 COMPARING ROMANIA AND SLOVAKIA

The hypothesis of this thesis claims that the government policies in Slovakia are more restrictive on Hungarian minorities than the ones of Romania. Sections 2.1 and 2.2 have aimed to prove this by explaining the developments in the government in the recent past, the relations with the kin-state, Hungary, and the language policies in the respective states. The following section attempts to outline and summarize the differences between Romania and Slovakia and draws several conclusions.

Firstly, several developments had been visible regarding minority rights and protection in both countries before and during EU accession. However, both Romania and Slovakia have seemed to stall in this direction after EU accession and neither government intends to provide the minority with additional rights.⁹⁵ In Slovakia's case, it could be argued that minority protection had deteriorated after the accession period.

Secondly, although both countries officially support multiculturalism and promote linguistic tolerance, it appears that minimum is being done in order to truly fulfill these requirements and create a favorable environment for the minority, their language and their culture. Moreover, the governments and the atmosphere in the countries seems to be everything but favorable for minorities. In some cases, it is even argued that EU accession might have helped in a few official issues, but the overall anti-minority rhetoric stayed the same or became stronger.⁹⁶ An example is the question of recognizing Kosovo, which divided the EU into two groups. Slovakia and Romania belonged to the minority that refused to recognize it, as the governments considered it

⁹⁵ Eplenyi, Kata. *The Language Rights Of Hungarian Communities In Slovakia And Romania: The Impacts And Perspectives Of EU-Membership*. MA Thesis. 61. Central European University, Budapest, 2009.

⁹⁶ Lugosi, Nicole. "The Hungarian minority question in Romania and Slovakia." *Review of Applied Socio-Economic Research* (2011). Web.

might trigger and inspire separatists movements of their Hungarian minorities to demand independence as well.⁹⁷

Lastly, it is evident that the historical context and past political developments in the countries are extremely important for the analysis of the environment minorities live in. The previous section laid out information about the historical context, focusing mainly on the last two decades, as going further back in history would be beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is vital to acknowledge additional historical context as a part of analyzing minority-majority relations.

The cases diverge from each other on various instances. Although both countries share a similarly restrictive attitude towards their Hungarian minorities, as stated in the hypothesis of this thesis, Slovakia's case can be considered as more restrictive. The reasons for this vary and, as mentioned above, some are beyond the span of this thesis. As noted in Miklós Kontra's 'Sociolinguistics of Hungarian', the situation of Hungarians in Slovakia is exceptional also because of education, clearly stating that they are "less educated," their textbooks are censored and the number of classes of Hungarian language is limited.⁹⁸

The peculiar relationship of the Slovak government with Hungary, as well as its internal political situation, is also most definitely an important factor that makes the case different from Romania. Even though SNS, the nationalist party, currently does not have a representation in the National Council, its nationalism and populism became an organic part of Slovak politics.⁹⁹ Also, the internal rifts of the Hungarian minority representatives and the conflicts between Most-Híd and SMK are not beneficial to the status of the Hungarian minority either. Not only does Slovakia lack a solid strong Hungarian party whose aim is to represent the minority, disregarding the political circumstances in the country, such splits also affect the relations with the kin state.

⁹⁷ "Breakaway Role Model: Separatist Movements Seek Inspiration in Kosovo." *SPIEGEL ONLINE*. Web. 6 May 2015. <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/breakaway-role-model-separatist-movements-seek-inspiration-in-kosovo-a-537008-2.html>>.

⁹⁸ Kontra, Miklós. "Sociolinguistics of Hungarian." *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 7. Web. 13 May 2015.

⁹⁹ Eplenyi, Kata. *The Language Rights Of Hungarian Communities In Slovakia And Romania: The Impacts And Perspectives Of EU-Membership*. MA Thesis. 63. Central European University, Budapest, 2009.

The two active parties often face conflicts and disagreements, further weakening the status of the minority in the country. Furthermore, although Most-Híd's agenda largely focuses on Hungarians, because of its label as the party for all minorities, its relations or support from Hungary is extremely weak or even nonexistent. Issues as such are not present in Romania, as RMDSZ is acting on behalf of the minority in all political conditions, there is more unity and cooperation and its relationship with Hungary is straightforward.¹⁰⁰ Yet disregarding internal problems and strictly concerning kin-state relations, the support of Hungary is present in both Romania and Slovakia.

Overall, it can be concluded that the environment in which the Slovak Hungarian minority lives can be considered as more restricted than the one in Romania, whereas minorities living in both countries are supported by Hungary. The following chapter focuses on the effects this has on minority behavior, observed through education, language use and minority activism.

¹⁰⁰ Bugár, Béla. Personal interview. 26 Apr. 2015.

CHAPTER 3 – THE EFFECTS ON MINORITY BEHAVIOR

The previous chapter attempted to analyze the environment and status of the Hungarian minorities living in Romania and Slovakia. The next sections concentrate on minority education, language use and minority activism with the aim to examine minority behavior. The examination of the three mentioned aspects provides a comprehensive and current evaluation of minority behavior, as it includes all age groups in all spheres of political and public life.

3.1 EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION

In a society where numerous groups are trying to reproduce their culture and manifest their ethnic identity, the schooling system of the country becomes an institution of chief political importance.¹⁰¹ According to Kymlicka, a multinationalism theorist, “having publicly funded education in one’s mother tongue is crucial, since it guarantees the passing on of the language and its associated traditions to the next generation.”¹⁰² As discussed in the previous chapter, the nationalist majorities pursued education policies that compelled the minorities to gradually shift to the majority language, limiting the opportunities for minority education. Although it can be concluded that Romania as well as Slovakia have an overall restrictive attitude towards minorities, the effects it has on minority education varies in each country. Without a connection to and education in the minority language, the members of the minority are less likely to mobilize and participate in manifesting their ethnic identity and culture. With the significance that is given to minority education in language, culture and identity preservation, it could be assumed that both Romanian and Slovak Hungarians, both in the official and private sphere, would equally demand for sufficient education opportunities and utilize the opportunities available to them.

Nevertheless, as this section reveals, it is not the case.

¹⁰¹ Csergo, Zsuzsa. *Talk of the Nation: Language and Conflict in Romania and Slovakia*. Cornell UP, 2007. 146. Print.

¹⁰²Kymlicka, Will, and Magda Opalski. "Can Liberal Pluralism Be Exported?" 17. Web. 13 May 2015.

In Romania, the 1995 law allowed a certain level of separation within minority language educational units, but within higher education, no form of institutional autonomy was permitted.¹⁰³ In 1998, an amendment was proposed to establish multi-cultural universities, but the government failed to agree on this and the Hungarian minority remains to be dissatisfied. However, the largest state funded university in the country, Babes-Bolyai University at Cluj-Napoca, holds 30% of its lectures in Hungarian, with the minority language used in written communication, academic communication, public relations or on posters as well.¹⁰⁴

Higher education is perhaps the only field in which the Hungarians in Slovakia have an advantage over the Hungarians in Romania. Although Slovakia does have a separate state-funded Hungarian university as discussed earlier in the thesis, research from 2013 indicates that the Hungarian minority population has a statistically lower average of qualified citizens compared to the national average, especially in university level education.¹⁰⁵ Since similar research had not been conducted in Romania since the establishment of Hungarian lectures at Babes-Bolyai, a comparison with Slovakia in this particular aspect is not feasible. However, the Hungarian representatives in Romania persist in intensive demanding for a more institutionalized form of autonomy in education, expressing the minority's desire for more educational opportunities. Despite the fact that the opportunities in Slovakia in this specific case are more accessible for the Hungarian minority, they do not seem to take them to their full advantage.

Notwithstanding the university situation, Romania's legislation and offerings for the education of ethnic Hungarians is still considered as one of the most liberal in all of Europe.¹⁰⁶ In Slovakia,

¹⁰³Horváth, István, and Scacco, Alexandra. "From The Unitary To The Pluralistic: Fine-Tuning Minority Policy In Romania." 226. Web.

¹⁰⁴"The Multicultural Feature." *Babes Bolyai University*. Web. 13 May 2015.
<http://www.ubbcluj.ro/en/despre/misiune/caracter_multicultural>.

¹⁰⁵"Number of Hungarian Minority Members in Slovakia Decreases." (Slovak). *Aktuality.sk*. Web. 15 May 2015. <<http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/234605/pocet-prislusnikov-madarskej-mensiny-na-slovensku-klesa/>>.

¹⁰⁶ Connelly, Julianna. "Hungary, Slovakia and Romania: International Relations Examined Through Minority Language Education." *Organon*, 41:2009. Web.

the circumstances within pre-school, elementary and high school education are far from ideal concerning legislation or offerings. Moreover, the participation in the schools that are offering and accessible for Hungarian education had been gradually dropping in the past few years. Between the years 2001 and 2009, a drop of 16,93% had been recorded in pre-school and elementary school institutions.¹⁰⁷ As pre-school and elementary education is mandatory in Slovakia, the total number of ethnic Hungarian children should match the number of children signed up for Hungarian schooling institutions. Yet, these figures do not match, indicating that a substantial number of Hungarian children are attending Slovak schools.¹⁰⁸ The drops in participation figures are present in high school education as well. Between the years of 2001 and 2011, there was a decrease of 14,83% in the participation of ethnic Hungarian students in Hungarian high schools. A study conducted by FORUMINST had also indicated that the Hungarian minority did not benefit from and take advantage of the sources and opportunities available for the establishment of new schooling institutions. According to the research, although financial resources and legislative grounds were favorable, no new schools were established. It is also important to consider the fact that the education sector was clearly lacking in certain fields, as there is a deficiency of Hungarian gymnasiums and no conservatoriums.¹⁰⁹ Another negative development is the significant decrease in the number of Hungarian schools, specifically in secondary vocational schools that overall remains to be a popular form of education in Slovakia.¹¹⁰

Currently in Slovakia, there are several other issues regarding education to be solved, but have not been receiving much attention. For example, the 2008 amendment to the Law on Education imposed several restrictions on the use of Hungarian textbooks. Firstly, two popular

¹⁰⁷ Komzsik, Attila, and Bela Laszlo. "State of Institutional Education of the Hungarian Minority in Slovakia." (Slovak). *Multi Kulti*. 23. Web.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 24. However, it is important to note that these statistics refer only to children with a Hungarian nationality, not including children with a Slovak nationality that consider their mother tongue Hungarian.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 26.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

history books written by Slovak Hungarians were removed from the reading lists of students and replaced by books written by Slovaks and translated into Hungarian for no apparent reason.¹¹¹ The amendment also argued against the use of Hungarian geographic names in textbooks, solving the issue by simply erasing them and replacing them with Slovak ones.¹¹² After criticism from the Hungarian minority, Hungarian names in brackets were added to the Slovak names, but these textbooks were sent back to the Ministry as the minority found this insufficient.¹¹³ After a long period of negotiations, the government agreed to include “deep-rooted historic” Hungarian names in the textbooks.¹¹⁴ However, in practice, 7 years since, many textbooks are still to be edited and the wording of the agreement creates space for possible misuse, as it is not certain which Hungarian names are allowed to be included. Moreover, it has been argued that the distribution of EU funds is discriminatory towards minority education.¹¹⁵ As EU funding as such is a issue of controversy in Slovakia and there are no official statistics proving the unfairness, this is another problem yet to be solved.

In Romania, most of the above-mentioned problems are not present. The education system up until university level schooling is very extensive, with the number of Hungarian schools and number of Hungarian students increasing each year. Between the years of 1991 and 2002, an increase of 9.84% was recorded in the number of Hungarian schools in Romania.¹¹⁶ A report by Education Reform Initiative of Southern Eastern Europe also notes that although Romania lacks a state funded Hungarian university, two privately funded ones were established in early 2000s.

¹¹¹ Eplenyi, Kata. *The Language Rights Of Hungarian Communities In Slovakia And Romania: The Impacts And Perspectives Of EU-Membership*. MA Thesis. 52. Central European University, Budapest, 2009.

¹¹² "Minority Report 02.08." MKDSZ. Web. 15 May 2015. <<http://mkdsz.hu/content/view/8840>>.

¹¹³ "Hungarian Teachers Will Return Textbooks Missing Hungarian Names." (Slovak). *Noviny.sk*. Web. 15 May 2015. <<http://www.noviny.sk/c/slovensko/madarski-ucitelia-vratia-ucebnice-v-ktory-chybaju-madarske-nazvy>>.

¹¹⁴ "SMK Wants To Include More Hungarian Names In Textbooks." (Slovak). *Topky.sk*. Web. 15 May 2015. <<http://www.topky.sk/cl/10/542890/SMK-chce-dopnit-do-ucebnic-dalsie-madarske-nazvy>>.

¹¹⁵ "Eurofunding for Education is Unsatisfactory, Only Half Used." (Slovak). *TERAZ.sk*. Web. 13 May 2015. <<http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/cerpanie-eurofondov-vzdelavanie-/105629-clanok.html>>.

¹¹⁶ Andreescu, Gabriel. "Analytical Report Minority Education National Focal Point Romania." *Report on Minority Education in Romania* (2004): 3. Print.

The same report also claims that the Hungarian minority enjoys a complete education in their mother tongue and that their educational standards had always been maintained at a high level. When this was contested in 1989, the arguments led to the bloody conflict of Targu Mures, where Hungarians demanded a separate schooling system. Although the education legislation in Slovakia was similarly if not more restrictive, disputes of such intensity never took place.

On a related note, an interesting study was conducted by Anna Fenyvesi to observe the attitudes of schoolchildren coming from Hungarian minorities towards their mother tongue and the majority language. Fenyvesi claims that studying such attitudes is important, as they affect the success or failure of minority language strategies and reveal whether there is a strong process of identification with the mother tongue of the minorities.¹¹⁷ Her research indicates that in Romania, Hungarian schoolchildren's attitudes towards their mother tongue is statistically significantly more positive than towards the majority language, Romanian.¹¹⁸ The situation in Slovakia is, once again, different – the research reveals quite the opposite, as Hungarian schoolchildren have a more positive attitude towards the majority language, Slovak, compared to their mother tongue, Hungarian. The author regards Romania's high ratings of Hungarian as a positive tendency on the level of the regional community.¹¹⁹

Overall, concerning education, it can be concluded that except for university education, the conditions in Romania are more favorable towards the Hungarian minority than in Slovakia. Despite this, the minority in Slovakia is less active in demanding more educational opportunities or benefit from the ones available to them.

3.2 LANGUAGE USE

The previous section signified some language attitudes towards Hungarian present in Romania

¹¹⁷Fenyvesi, Anna. "Hungarian Minorities in Romania, Slovakia and Serbia: Schoolchildren's Attitudes to their Languages." *Finnisch-Ugrische Mitteilungen* Band 35. 35-54. Print.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 45.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 49.

and Slovakia. This part expands in that direction, focusing on language use of the respective minorities as an integral part of minority mobilization and participation. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the use of minority languages helps increase the level of participation of minorities, as well as their presence and visibility within a state.¹²⁰ OHCHR also denotes that the most effective way to increase the participation of minorities in public life is for the authorities to use their mother tongue wherever possible. This does not only generate positive results in higher voting rates or more involvement in political life, but also a general sense of satisfaction and greater identification with the state.¹²¹ Similarly as with education, the differing legislative environments the minorities live in result in differing effects on their use of the mother tongue.

Should a minority in Slovakia reach a 20% population threshold, the county is entitled to create conditions for the use of the minority's language. This incorporates the inclusion of the county's Hungarian name in road and transportation signs, along with the Slovak one. According to a study conducted in 2010, 94% of such regions do have signs in two languages, the majority and minority language, while 6% are missing the sign in Hungarian.¹²² Cities and villages in Slovakia usually have a 'welcome' notice next to the regular road sign. The percentage of Hungarian signs is significantly lower in this case – more than one third of the counties with a threshold higher than 20% are missing the Hungarian part of the 'welcome' sign.¹²³ The study also notes that the Hungarian text often undergoes vandalism, with 33% counties experiencing damage to the sign at some point. The situation is even worse with bus station signs, where over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the signs in the examined Hungarian counties are only in Slovak language.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ "Minority Rights: International Standards and Guidance for Implementation." *United Nations Human Rights* (2010). Web. 33. 7 May 2015.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Mrva, Marianna, and Timea Szilvassy. "Bilingualism in the Counties of Southern Slovakia." (Slovak). (2010): 39. Print.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 40.

With regard to the official domain in the studied regions with a high Hungarian population percentage, the problems with language use are not as acute. Most representatives agreed with the statement that everyone is able to speak in their respective mother tongue during council meetings, as most people understand both Slovak and Hungarian. Although the percentage of Slovak and Hungarian members of city councils is around the same level, the mayor has a Hungarian nationality in 74,2% counties and 90% of mayors speak Hungarian,¹²⁵ which has a positive impact on the overall minority language use in the official and public domain. It is important to make a distinction between spoken and written language, as the results differ greatly. A summary of a study conducted in 2011 indicates that 76,3% counties publish information in Slovak, while only 4,8% publish in Hungarian and 18,9% in both languages. The reason for this is the lack of funding and time available for translating, but also the lack of knowledge in Hungarian terminology. According to FORUMINST's study, people are also not taking advantage of the opportunity to fill out official documentations in their mother tongue, as most paperwork (70%) is received in Slovak.¹²⁶

As per the latest statistics, 75% of Romanian Hungarians live in counties with a Hungarian population of over 20% and hence enjoy the legislature for the official use of the minority language. Similarly to Slovakia, Romania has a high percentage (90%) of double-language road signs too, but the minority also uses its rights for double-language signs elsewhere, like in county councils (80%) or post offices (23%).¹²⁷ Compared to Slovakia, Romania uses Hungarian more in written form as well, with 50,8% of documents written in Hungarian in county councils. However, as in Slovakia, the written form of Hungarian is significantly lower than spoken Hungarian (94,8%).¹²⁸ In Hungarian households, the use of the mother tongue of the minority is

¹²⁵ Ibid, 43.

¹²⁶ Mrva, Marianna, and Timea Szilvassy. "Dvojazyčnosť v Obciach Južného Slovenska." (2010): 46. Print.

¹²⁷ Horvath, Istvan. "Romania: Justice in Minority Linguistic Rights and their Institutional Validation." (Hungarian). *Gyakorlatok Az Európai Unió Belül*. 188. Print.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 189.

high as well. A study conducted in 2011 asked its respondents to choose a number from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating “pure Hungarian” and 5 “pure Romanian”, judging what language they speak at home. The average of a representative population sample was 1,22, revealing that the use of Hungarian amongst the minorities is extremely high.¹²⁹ The research also looked at the use of Hungarian amongst friends, during shopping, at work and in hospitals – none of the figures were higher than 2,5, demonstrating strong loyalty to the use of Hungarian overall. The use of Hungarian in households received a rating of no larger than 1,58 in Hungarian households, no matter the percentage of Hungarian minority population living in the region (5 different categories of regions were examined).

There are several deductions that can be based on this section. Firstly, in Slovakia, there is a significant difference between the use of spoken and written Hungarian. Although the percentage of people speaking Hungarian in the official sphere is high, the minority is not taking advantage of the language legislation available to them, given the missing signs in different locations and the lack of written Hungarian in county councils. Although funding is used as an explanation for this, it can be assumed that there is also a lack of attention and effort, as well as increasing assimilation of the minority. In Romania, the Hungarian minority seems to be more aware of their rights, demonstrated by the high percentages of the use of Hungarian, both in spoken and written form. As stated in the beginning of this section, the use of minority languages plays an important role in the minority’s overall participation, presence and visibility within the state. Hence, it can be concluded that the participation of the Slovak Hungarian minority Slovakia is greatly hindered by its shortcoming the use of Hungarian language.

3.3 MINORITY ACTIVISM

There are various means through which minorities all across the world attempt to increase

¹²⁹ Ibid.

their status within states, gain more rights and fight against restrictive policies. As mentioned many times in this thesis, Slovakia's and Romania's treatment of minorities is not adequate in all directions and not consistent with all the minorities' demands. Periods of struggle between the host and kin states as well as between the minority and majority groups caused the minority activism and radicalization to fluctuate over time. This section aims to explain the current situation, describing a number of ways through which ethnic Hungarians in the respective countries are presently striving to achieve their goals through minority activism. Three major Hungarian organizations have been selected in Romania and Hungary as examples.

In Slovakia, there are three main institutions engaging in activities regarding minority activism and mobilization. FORUMINST, one of the first Hungarian minority initiatives founded after the '89 revolutions, carries out complex research and studies the situation of the national minorities in Slovakia, operating as a public and service institute.¹³⁰ It also serves as a publishing house, distributing publications documenting their research and the written and non-written heritage of Hungarians in Slovakia. Some of the analyses carried out by FORUMINST aim to point out the gaps in legislation regarding minorities or the spheres in which the minorities are not being active enough. An example of such research is the study of Hungarian language use in the official domain, which is mentioned in the previous section of this thesis, indicating that people are not fully using the rights that are available to them. FORUMINST also created a simple guide to the understanding of minority rights in Slovakia, intending to activate and raise awareness amongst the minority.

Another similar organization operating in Slovakia is 'Kerekasztal', or 'Round Table'. This institution is voluntary, informal and independent from politics, aiming to provide consultations to Hungarians from Slovakia. The meetings of Kerekasztal are open to any cultural, regional,

¹³⁰ "The Forum Institute." *FORUMINST*. Web. 15 May 2015. <<http://foruminst.sk/en/about-us/the-forum-institute/>>.

state or non-state organizations that act in the interests of the Hungarian community in Slovakia or feel responsible for its developments and growth.¹³¹ The institution also organizes protests, petitions and launched a website with news and information purely on issues regarding the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.¹³² The website aims to provide unbiased information and Hungarian positions on various issues, as its creators believe that Slovak news are often directed against Hungarians.

One of the most recent Hungarian minority organizations is 'Kétnyelvű Dél-Szlovákia/ Dvojazyčné Južné Slovensko' (KDSZ) or 'Two-language Southern Slovakia.' The organization consists of a group of activists who are fighting against the apathy of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, as they believe that the Hungarian language is becoming less visible, despite the rights available to them.¹³³ The priority of KDSZ is to eliminate visual discrimination of the Hungarian language and consequently see the emergence of a more confident Hungarian minority that is aware of the legislation and is proud to identify with the Hungarian ethnicity. KDSZ initiated several projects, mainly focusing at adding the Hungarian names of villages and cities to road and transportation signs where the Hungarian name was missing,¹³⁴ The organization also sends letters to the government, city councils, bus and train stations with complaints about the missing signs, arguing that Hungarians are tax payers too and hence there should be no exceptions.

Hungarian Romanians have several similar organizations as well. One of them is the Civic Engagement Movement (CEMO), which promotes civic engagement, informed and active citizenship through various public awareness and educational projects, discussions, research and debates.¹³⁵ One of CEMO's foremost projects is Bilingualism, which educates people about their

¹³¹ "About Us." (Slovak). *Kerekasztal*. Web. 17 May 2015. <<http://www.kerekasztal.org/sk/o-nas/y>>.

¹³² "About Us." (Slovak). *Madari.sk*. Web. 17 May 2015. <<http://madari.sk/o-nas>>.

¹³³ "About Us." (Slovak). *Kétnyelvű Dél-Szlovákia*. Web. 17 May 2015. <<http://www.ketnyelvu.info/sk/djs-info/>>.

¹³⁴ "The Dunaszerdahely Project." Web. 13 May 2015. <<http://www.ketnyelvu.info/sk/2013/11/07/the-dunaszerdahely-project/>>.

¹³⁵ "About Us." *CEMO*. Web. 17 May 2015. <http://www.cemo.ro/en/about_us.html>.

language rights, points out faults in legislation and created a documentation of the faults in implementing European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Romania. Bilingualism frequently takes action in Hungarian regions by monitoring the number of bilingual street signs and adding the Hungarian names to the Romanian ones, writing open letters to councils to indicate the faults and gaps in implementing legislation, or carrying out extensive research on the quality of Hungarian education in Romania.¹³⁶ CEMO also publishes regular blogs on the situation of minorities and upcoming events citizens can take part in.

‘Musai-Muszály’ is a group of Hungarians originating from Cluj-Napoca and are fighting for the city to be trilingual – Romanian, Hungarian and German. One of their projects is changing the welcome sign of the city and if their initiative is successful, Cluj will greet its visitors with three names – Cluj-Napoca, Kolozsvár and Klausenberg. Although most supporters of the group are ethnic Hungarians, there is a growing number of Romanians who are supporting the idea of a multicultural city as well.¹³⁷ Musai-Muszály uses contemporary and creative methods of campaigning to appeal to a wider audience with flash mobs, social media campaigns and various public events aiming to attract and include as many people as possible. Each month, the group organizes a multi lingual debate open for everyone, instigating inter-ethnic dialogue and the discussion issues concerning multiculturalism. The meetings are said to be popular amongst the public.¹³⁸

Lastly, ‘igen-tessék! da, poftiți!’ is a civic movement supported by various NGOs across Romania. The project is supporting multiculturalism by approaching businesses and different service providers and asking them to join the ‘igen-tessék! da, poftiți!’ movement. Subsequently, they are provided with posters, stickers and other promotional materials with the slogan ‘igen-

¹³⁶ "Bilingualism 2012." *CEMO*. Web. 15 May 2015. <http://www.cemo.ro/en/bilingualism_2012.html>.

¹³⁷ "Multicultural Romania: Young Hungarians Use Creative Protests to Call for Trilingual Cluj-Napoca." *Hungarian Free Press*. Web. 17 May 2015. <<http://hungarianfreepress.com/2015/04/10/multicultural-romania-young-hungarians-use-creative-protests-to-call-for-trilingual-cluj-napoca/>>.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*.

tessék! da, poftiți!’, indicating that the employees and staff of the business are bilingual.¹³⁹ The firms participating in the movement become a part of the organization’s list that appears online, on notice boards across cities and in informational and call centers.¹⁴⁰ The businesses benefit from the promotion the movement provides, while demonstrating their cultural awareness and using culture-sensitive marketing. As ‘igen-tessék! da, poftiți!’ notes, the movements objectives “undoubtedly contribute to better interethnic coexistence and to an increased degree of comfort of the minority communities.”¹⁴¹

Although both minorities have movements representing their interests and attempting to improve the minority situations as much as possible, in the end it is up to the minority as a whole to achieve their goals, not a group of initiative people. Despite their importance in raising awareness about faulty or lacking legislation and implementation of directives, it is the citizens’ responsibility to fully enjoy the rights available to them. As discussed in the previous sections of this thesis, it is common that the Hungarian minority especially in Slovakia does not benefit from the legislation for minorities, regardless of the campaigning of activists. However, when it comes to minority activism as such, the mere existence of these initiatives in Romania and Slovakia demonstrates a certain level of activism in the countries.

It is not applicable to draw a comparison and determine which minority organization is more successful or active. Yet with the increased level of restrictiveness of Slovakia’s government compared to the situation in Romania, it could be expected that Slovakia’s Hungarian minority would take more radical steps by more extreme means in order to improve the status of minorities. Nonetheless, a sociological study conducted in 2008 demonstrates that Hungarians in

¹³⁹ ‘igen-tessék! da, poftiți!’ means ‘yes, please!’ in Romanian and Hungarian. It is a phrase commonly used by staff when a customer enters a store. By approaching the customers in two language, he or she has the opportunity to choose which language to communicate in.

¹⁴⁰ "Rolunk." *Igen, Tessék!* Web. 17 May 2015. <<http://www.igentessek.ro/rolunk.php>>.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Slovakia list minority problems as merely the sixth most important issue amongst other ones.¹⁴²

Bugár notes that this is noticeable amongst the minority in present times as well.¹⁴³ As described in the opening chapter of this thesis, Erin Jenne's theory of ethnic bargaining would expect Slovakia to currently be in a state of conflict, as the lobby actor, Hungary, can be considered as supportive, while the host government, Slovakia, is rather restrictive. As stated by Jenne, this would result in a radicalized minority.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, by looking at minority activist groups in both countries, it can be concluded that the methods and intensity used to achieve their objectives are without major divergences in Romania and Slovakia. In fact, according to a member of KDSZ, Hungarians in Slovakia are much harder to mobilize and are not as willing to take part in movements or protests compared to Hungarians in Romania.¹⁴⁵ As an example, he recalls the demonstration to support Hedviga Malinová initiated by Kerekasztal. Kovács notes that a much higher participation was expected, as only a few hundred people attended despite the controversy and campaigning surrounding the case.¹⁴⁶ This can also be observed in the agendas and past events of the abovementioned organizations – while Romanian CEMO, *Musai-Muszály and igen-tessék! da, poftiți!* frequently organize spontaneous protests, demonstrations and open discussions, the Slovak organizations tend to focus more on activities within the structure of the group, outweighing events that include the wider public and the participation of citizens.

¹⁴² "Trochu Svetla Do čierňavy Slovensko-maďarských Vzťahov!" *Prameň : Trochu Svetla Do čierňavy Slovensko-maďarských Vzťahov!* Web. 13 May 2015. <<http://www.pramen.info/c/1756/trochu-svetla-do-ciernavy-slovensko-madarskych-vztahov-.htm>>.

¹⁴³ Bugár, Béla. Personal interview. 26 Apr. 2015

¹⁴⁴ Jenne, Erin K. *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007. 43. Print.

¹⁴⁵ Kovács, Balázs. Personal interview. 29 Apr. 2015.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 4 – CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

This thesis highlights some of the crucial differences between the Hungarian minority situation of Romania and Slovakia. By analyzing the historical and political context of the countries, it is apparent that there are major disparities between the two. An important factor is the emergence of an independent Slovak state in 1993, which caused a new wave of nationalism in the country, as its citizens felt the need to protect their newly acquired independent Slovak identity. Another key point is the political development of Hungarian parties in the respective countries – it is evident that the Hungarian minority benefits from the political unity in Romania and the fact that RMDSZ remains to be in the government, regardless of the parties it shares its seats with. Additional exploration of historical and political developments could provide new perceptions and the focus of this thesis on rather recent occurrences could be viewed as a limitation.

Furthermore, Romania and Slovakia have differing relations with Hungary, which plays an important role in supporting the minorities. Although the relations with Hungary are currently considered to be at peace and Orbán's government does support the minorities in certain aspects, as analyzed in Chapter 2, Romania enjoys a more direct relationship that reflects on the minority situation as well. By comparing the two countries, this thesis determines the importance of the internal political situation, as it crucially affects the potency of the kin-state relationship. Analyzing the reasons behind this relationship in more depth could lay ground for further exploration.

Moreover, Romania's Hungarians also benefit from more open language policies, an integral part of the welfare of minorities. Thus, simply put, it can be concluded that overall and due to various complex factors, the Hungarian minority in Romania is at an advantage compared to the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. The pivotal question of this thesis remains – how does this affect minority behavior, regarding participation and mobilization?

As seen in chapter 3, this question is analyzed through observing minority education, language use and activism. The examination of education and language use demonstrates the lack of participation of the Hungarians in Slovakia, who often fail to enjoy or implement the legislation addressed to their minority and indicate apathy towards the use of Hungarian. The study of activism shows that despite the assumption of Hungarian Slovaks to radicalize, the minority groups and organizations are of great similarity to the Romanian ones. Hence what can be derived from these analyses?

The hypothesis of this thesis can be accepted, as according to the research conducted, *in spite of the openness of the Romanian policies in comparison with the Slovak one, the Hungarian minority in Romania is more active than in Slovakia.* The findings of this thesis demonstrate that the behavior of minorities is affected by various factors in different ways. The introductory chapter of this thesis explained the ethnic bargaining theory of Erin Jenne, which has proven to match the case of Romania, but not Slovakia. This provides a new perspective on minority behavior and the underlying reasons behind it, suggesting that instead of an expected radicalized, conflict risking Hungarian minority, a restrictive host country can lead to an apathetic minority, despite the support it receives from the lobby state.

It is important to consider the factors affecting minority behavior other than the ones discussed in this thesis. For example, the reason behind certain behavior of the minority could be explained by discrimination, which is beyond the scope of this thesis. Discrimination could serve as an explanation for lower levels of the use of the mother tongue, while the work opportunities for Hungarian speaking citizens could clarify the reasons behind the choice of language for education. The attitudes of the majority towards the minority have a potential to greatly affect the lives and mobilization of the minorities.

Another factor is the historical context – although described in this thesis, it only includes approximately the last twenty years, but the historical developments before the respective revolutions have a severe impact on the Hungarian minorities as well. The past is deeply rooted

in both minorities and could be accounted to the differences observed between them. For example, while Romanian Hungarians had always been distinguished from Romanians due to their Orthodox religion, Slovaks and Hungarians mostly share the same religion. This had and still has several lasting effects, like more common ethnically mixed marriages that accelerate the assimilation of the minority in Slovakia, and increased social segmentation in Romania.

Additionally, it is not only the legislation aimed directly at minorities that affects them, but also other factors like the overall economic, political and social situation in the country. It is also important to realize that while Hungarians in Slovakia are dispersed along the northern border of Hungary, Hungarians in Romania have a more central location, without much border contact with Hungary. Analyzing this information could provide basis for further research of this topic, as it is clear that there is much to be observed in this field.

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