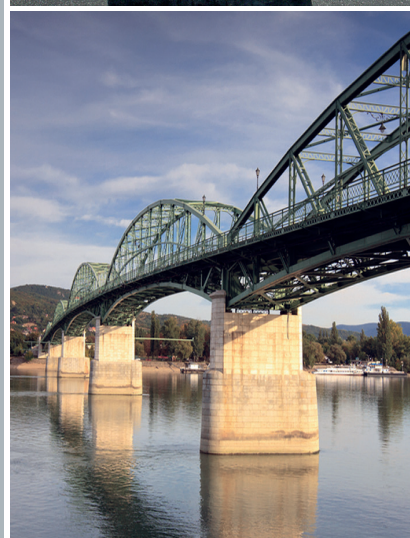


Jana Šutajová  
Štefan Šutaj

# Nationality Policy in Slovakia 2004 – 2018

(Selected Aspects  
of Hungarian  
Minority Policy)





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**Jana Šutajová – Štefan Šutaj**

UNIVERSUM

Prešov 2020

**Jana Šutajová – Štefan Šutaj:**

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(Selected Aspects of Hungarian Minority Policy)**

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Cover:             Peter Švorc

The publication was released within of frame of solving the project APVV-15-0745 Trends in the Development of Ethnic Relations in Slovakia (Comparative Research on Nationality Issue between 2004 – 2020) (TESS2)

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Institute of Social Sciences 2020

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For the Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Institute of Social Sciences published by UNIVERSUM-EU, s. r. o., Javorinská 26, 080 01 Prešov (www.universum-eu.sk)

Prešov 2020

ISBN 978-80-89946-18-1

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# Introduction

The Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences, the Institute of Social Sciences of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in cooperation with the Departments of Political Science and History of the Faculty of Arts of Pavel Jozef Šafárik University in Košice has implemented the project “*Trends in the Development of Ethnic Relations in Slovakia (Comparative Research on Nationality Issue in 2004 – 2020)*” supported by the Agency for the Support of Science and Research. One of the aims of the project was to compare the current state in the reflection of ethnic relations among the population of Slovakia determined by means of empirical questionnaire research conducted in 2017 with the results obtained in the state program of research and development 2003 – 2005 entitled: “*Nation, Nationalities and Ethnic Groups in the Process of Transformation of Slovak Society*”.<sup>1</sup> The results of this comparative research have already been published in the final research report and several collections, as well as in individual studies of project collaborators in professional and scientific journals, or presented at scientific conferences.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 The results of the project were published in two extensive research reports: VÝROST, J. – HOMIŠINOVÁ, M. (eds.). *Národ, národnosti a etnické skupiny v procese transformácie slovenskej spoločnosti*. Košice: Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV, CD-ROM, 2005; ŠUTAJ, Š. – HOMIŠINOVÁ, M. – SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. – ŠUTAJOVÁ, J. *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku v procesoch transformácie po roku 1989 (identita a politika)*. Prešov: Universum, 2006. Further results and partial analyses were published in the collections: ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.). *Národ a národnosti na Slovensku – stav výskumu po roku 1989 a jeho perspektívy*. Prešov: Universum, 2004; ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.). *Prezidentské dekréty Edvarda Beneša v povojnovom období*. Prešov: Universum, 2004; ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.). *Národ a národnosti na Slovensku v transformujúcej sa spoločnosti – vzťahy a konflikty*. Prešov: Universum, 2005; ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.). *Národnostná politika Slovenskej republiky po roku 1989*. Prešov: Universum, 2005.
  - 2 In the collections published as part of the project, in which the authors present the results of the research: ŠUTAJ, Š. a kol. *Tendencie vývoja etnických vzťahov na Slovensku (komparatívny výskum národnostnej problematiky v rokoch 2004 – 2020). (Záverčná správa z výskumu)*. Prešov: Universum, 2019, 175 p; ŠUTAJOVÁ, J. *Zákon o národnostiach a Rada vlády Slovenskej socialistickej republiky pre národnosti (predstavy a realita)*. Košice: UPJŠ, 2019; V zborníkoch vydaných v rámci projektu, v ktorých autori prezentujú výsledky výskumu: ŠUTAJ, Š. – HELDÁKOVÁ, L. – REGINÁČOVÁ, N. (eds.). *Current Issues of Research on Nationality Policy and Nationality Relations in Slovakia in the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries*. Prešov: Universum, 2017; KACEROVÁ, B. – ŠUTAJ, Š. – ŠUTAJOVÁ, J. (eds.). *Central European Connections in National Minorities Development at the Beginning of 21. Century*. Prešov: Universum, 2019; ĎURKOVSKÁ, M. – ŠUTAJ, Š. – REGINÁČOVÁ, M. (eds.) *Ethnic Relations in Slovakia at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Košice: Šafárikpress, 2020; KOHOUTOVÁ, K. – HELDÁKOVÁ, L. My grandpa wasn't a Hungarian! The Stigmata of home comers to Czechoslovakia through the second and third generation viewpoint. In *Words and Silences*, vol. 2019, p. 1-34; REGINÁČOVÁ, N. Die ethnische Bevölkerungsstatistik der Stadt Košice im Bevölkerungszensus der Jahre 1910 – 1921 In *Stadt und Krieg im 20. Jahrhundert*. Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2019, p. 45-65; VÝROST, J. – DOBEŠ, M. Trust in People and Attitudes Towards Immigration. In *Človek a spoločnosť*, 2019, Vol. 22, No. 1, p. 34-43; ĎURKOVSKÁ, M. – KENTOŠ, M. Vzťahy Rusínov a Ukrajincov v rokoch 2004 – 2017 = Interethnic relations of Ruthenians

The work presented is a summary of the political, and now as well the historical background of the development and ethnic policy in Slovakia, with a special focus on the Hungarian minority, in the period when data collection was conducted in both rounds. It can therefore extensively document the context that significantly influenced the results of the questionnaire surveys and could have influenced the way the respondents answered the questions asked. It is not the aim to list and summarize all the activities of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia in detail, we only want to focus on some aspects of ethnic policy.<sup>3</sup>

Based on the material obtained from publicly available sources and discussions in the media, we aim to analyse the phenomena that took place in the Slovak society in the monitored years and which may to some extent document the causes and consequences of state ethnic policy on the position and opinions of the population, as determined in the questionnaire surveys. Due to the scope of the issue, this work cannot pay attention to all the issues that were present in our research. Therefore, we selected some that we considered the most important. The aim is to contribute to the expansion of knowledge about nationality policy in Slovakia, ongoing ethnic processes in the Slovak society and Slovak-Hungarian relations.

The work will be published in two language versions, which will differ in both their content and their scope. The English version will contain only the results that we consider important for a foreign reader (we are also limited by the specified number of pages in the project). The Slovak language version will be more extensive, richer in analysis and the context of the researched issues (the analysis of institutions implementing nationality policy – the Government Council, Committee for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups, Plenipotentiary for National Minorities – it will also address other historical topics, the issues of administrative division, autonomy). We assume that further results obtained by this research, on the issue of institutional provision of nationality policy, culture, education and the use of the Hungarian minority language, as well as on historical contexts and Slovak-Hungarian interstate relations, will be the subject of further works. The resources for the preparation of this publication were obtained from various types of documents. In particular, these were the documents of state institutions, accessible on the websites of the authorities. These were official documents, minutes from meetings of the Government, the National Council of the Slovak Republic (NC SR), the President's Office, committees,

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and Ukrainians in 2004 – 2017. In *Človek a spoločnosť*, 2019, Vol. 22, supplement, p. 167-178; PEKÁR, M. – REGINÁČOVÁ, N. Between demography and politics: changing perceptions of nationality of the Slovak population in censuses 1869 – 1930. In *Romanian Journal of Population Studies*, 2016, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 57-70; ŠUTAJOVÁ, J. The Issue of Higher Education for Minorities in Slovakia in the Materials of the Government Council of the Slovak Socialist Republic for Nationalities in the 1970s. In *Človek a spoločnosť*, 2018, Vol. 21, No. 4, p. 45-58 and other.

3 In order to create such an analytical study or publication, it would be necessary to bring together a larger number of co-authors and researchers. An example of a publication of this type, which analyzes the period from 1989 to 2004, is the work, FAZEKAS, J. – HUNČÍK, P. (eds.). *Madári na Slovensku (1989 – 2004)*. Šamorín: Fórum inštitút pre výskum menšín, 2008.

the Government Council, which was responsible for the issues of human rights and national minorities, and its committees. Archival documents are not yet available. The monitoring reports prepared by Slovak official authorities on the basis of existing legislation (reports on the status and rights of persons belonging to national minorities, the culture and education of national minorities and the use of national minority languages) and the monitoring reports prepared under Slovakia's obligations resulting from the adoption of international documents on the issue of the rights of national minorities (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages; Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities) were an important source for our analyses.

Due to the fact that the documents are accessible on the web, when referring to them in the footnote, we will state only the basic information about the document. Their exact location on the Internet will be given in the annex, in the list of documents. Statistical data from the regular census and statistics on the results of elections to the European Parliament, the National Council of the Slovak Republic, elections for the President of the Republic, higher territorial units (VÚC) and self-government authorities in municipalities and cities were also an important source.

As our effort was to monitor not only the implementation of nationality policy but also the different perceptions and disputes about this policy, the contemporary press (dailies, weekly magazines, information and news portals ...) was an important source of information. With regard to the articles from the daily press, these were obtained by direct monitoring by the authors at the time when the articles appeared in electronic space or in printed form. Slovakia Online agency also monitored press from 2009 – 2018 through the for us. As a result of various data collection from contemporary press, in the case of the physically reviewed press, the title of the periodical, the date and the title of the article, as well as the data obtained by regular daily monitoring of periodicals via the Internet or the data from the aforementioned agency will also refer to the Internet source. Therefore, in order to preserve the authenticity of resources, there is a difference in the use of references to the, acquired resources.

Minority policy overlaps with the activities of several segments of state and public policy. It is part of the activities of central state authorities, specialized units of several ministries (of Education, Culture, Transport, Foreign Affairs, Justice, in a broader sense also the Ministry of the Interior, or other ministries). Particularly, we can observe it in the activities of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, in discussions and legislative activities of deputies representing citizens, in the activities of the President, the Constitutional Court, the Public Defender of Rights or institutions such as the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNSLP). Minority issues affect the self-governing regions and local governments as well. Given the space available to us, we cannot deal with all these elements influencing the nationality policy, however, we will perceive them and, if it is necessary to present them, we will do so. We will prioritize only some elements that participate in the formation and implementation of nationality policy. As we address the minority policy in Slovakia on the example of the Hungarian minority, it is necessary in this context to pay attention to the national policy of Hungary. It significantly interfered in Slovak minority policy during the

entire period under review. Slovak “solutions”, whether part of government policy, party policy, or the activities of organizations and associations representing the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, were often influenced by Hungarian policy. In many cases, the Slovak minority policy responded directly to Hungarian stimuli. We will only marginally address the international aspects of the Slovak-Hungarian relationship. A separate section will be devoted to political parties and the results of elections to representative bodies in Slovakia, including the elections of the President of the Republic and the elections to the European Parliament (EP). The last part will include some of the specific problems, based on the perception of the past of Slovak-Hungarian relations (on the example of the perception of Trianon and the related historical events). Unfortunately, we also have to make a selection here and we will address the issue of the historical context of Slovak-Hungarian relations in a separate publication.

Theoretical-methodological definition of the terms related to nationality (ethnic) issues is a complicated and demanding task, and it would require a lot of space if it were to be done comprehensively.<sup>4</sup> We will pay attention to these issues only in the case where it will be necessary to explain how the term was used in the political practice in Slovak and Hungarian politics, or if it is necessary to point out the different understanding of this concept.

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4 We will mention at least some works in the field of theoretical and methodological definition that have played an important role in anchoring nationality issues: GELLNER, E. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, (neskôr český preklad GELLNER, A. *Národy a nacionalismus*. Praha: Hříbal, 1993); BRUBACKER, HROCH a postupne mohla byť dopĺňovaná o práce z dielne slovenských a českých autorov: MARUŠIAK, J. – FERENCOVÁ, M. (eds.). *Teoretické prístupy k identitám a ich praktické aplikácie*. Bratislava: Veda, 2005; HROCH, M. *Národy nejsou dílem náhody. Příčiny a předpoklady utváření moderních evropských národů*. Praha: Slon, 2009; KILIÁNOVÁ, G. – KOWALSKÁ, E. – KREKOVIČOVÁ, E. (eds.). *My a tí druhí v modernej spoločnosti*. Bratislava: Veda, 2009; BAČOVÁ, V. – ŠUTAJ, Š. Comparison of Historical and Social-Psychological Research Approaches: The Cooperation Model. In VAJDOVÁ, L. (ed.). *Les Approches et méthodes interdisciplinaire de recherche en science social*. Bratislava: Institut francais de Bratislava, p. 45-51; ŠUTAJ, Š. Interdisciplinary Accesses in the Researches of the Slovak-Hungarian Relationships in History. Possibilities of Cooperation of the Humanitarian and Social Sciences. In IEDA, O. – NAGAYO, S. *Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube: Re.thinking the mening of Symbiosis-Past, Present And Future*. Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 2018, p. 77-92. [https://waseda.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=repository\\_opensearch&index\\_id=2926](https://waseda.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=repository_opensearch&index_id=2926)

# Nationality Policy as a Subject of Scientific Research

(specifics with regard to Slovak-Hungarian interethnic relations)

The issue of the relationship between the majority population and minority ethnic communities in the Central European area has represented one of the priorities and it has been given attention by the state authorities, the majority population and the members of minorities. Historical experience and the nature of current interethnic relations in Slovakia provide sufficient arguments for the various aspects of the impact of ethnicity on social development, together with the factors that modify them, to become a permanent subject of scientific research and for the transfer of these results to the practice of decision-making authorities and lawmakers.

The topicality and social significance of the development of interethnic relations in the Slovak Republic after November 1989 has been marked by the processes of ethnic identification, which have in certain cases taken on a distinct form. Special attention should be paid to Slovak-Hungarian relations, which, due to the common past, misunderstandings and atrocities, have a special place and significance for the stabilized position of Slovakia in contemporary Europe.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the national state and ethnicity became the foundation of conflicts and disputes in a troubled Europe. At the same time, ethnicity itself, in its natural form, is neutral, harmless and useful. However, in the hands of adventurers, it becomes a dangerous weapon.

The causes of the politicization of ethnicity have their historical, political and psychological dimensions. Ethnicity has become an important identifying feature not only of the state but also of the person. If ethnicity is politicized, there is the risk of an ethnic conflict, which is a specific manifestation of social conflict.<sup>5</sup>

Ethnic disputes often lead to conflicts of various kinds, including military conflicts. Extreme and aggressive varieties of nationalism have driven the world into war. It was the ethnic conflict that was one of the triggers for the wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, i.e. the global military conflicts and national liberation wars that were typical of the former colonial areas. However, if handled well and resolved positively, tensions and conflicts in social relations can also be a positive driver of social development and can lead to the strengthening of democratic elements in society, the introduction of new standards clarifying the position of individual groups of population or ethnic groups living in the country. However, uncontrolled tensions in social rela-

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5 BAČOVÁ, V. Historický a sociálno-psychologický kontext vzťahov medzi etnickými spoločnosťami. In ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.). *Národnostná politika Slovenskej republiky po roku 1989*. Prešov: Universum, 2005, p. 36-45; DENCÍK, L. Proces etnifikácie a deetnifikácie sociálnych konfliktov. In PLICHTOVÁ, J. (ed.). *Minority v politike*. Bratislava: Česko-slovenský výbor Európskej kultúrnej nadácie, 1991, p. 124.

tions paralyze individual activity, lead to apathy and ultimately result in open, often violent conflicts.

After 1989, there was a new open space for discussion on ethnic issues in Slovakia. *“The increase of ethnic self-awareness in a post-totalitarian society must be considered a legitimate process. By itself, we cannot judge it either positively or negatively. It is worse when it is strengthened due to conflict-creating factors and in an atmosphere of constant search for the enemy. In such a case, there is an undesirable differentiation, often disintegration of the society.”*<sup>6</sup> In the case of Slovakia, pessimistic scenarios which assumed the disintegration of society and the exacerbation of ethnic problems to an unbearable level similarly to the Yugoslavian model have not been fulfilled.

Even today, ethnicity acts as an important factor in social development. It has become part of the social movement, together with processes such as employment, computerization, digitization, migration processes (e.g. among the population of EU countries). Under its influence, which is no longer dominant, ethnicity proves to be an important factor for social mobilization (economic and political), demographic changes (mixed marriages, dual citizenship, dual identity) and ethnic changes (understanding identity, changes in the nature of assimilation processes...).

These changes significantly affected the ethnic conditions in Slovakia. In the past, strong interrelationships between ethnicity and other social processes - industrialization, modernization, democratization and liberalization of communities, were manifested by a different position of understanding of ethnicity when comparing the lines of development of communities in Eastern and Western Europe. Even today, ethnicity acts as an important factor in social development. It has become part of the social movement together with processes such as employment, computerization, digitization, migration processes (e.g. among the population of EU countries). Under its influence, which is no longer dominant, ethnicity proves to be an important factor for social mobilization (economic and political), demographic changes (mixed marriages, dual citizenship, dual identity) and ethnic (understanding identity, changes in the nature of assimilation processes...). These changes also significantly affected the ethnic conditions in Slovakia.

In the eastern and central part of Europe, the cultural understanding of the nation and cultural appeals to the formation of a nation prevailed. The mobilization of the nation towards unity was primarily emotional. The cultural idea of a nation emphasized ethnic and linguistic peculiarities; moral principles, loyalty, belonging; common traditions, customs, language; presumed common ancestors and a common historical destiny.<sup>7</sup> Also in the Slovak-Hungarian discourse, political disputes and confronta-

6 PAUKOVIČ, V. Etnická identita a jej rola v politickom živote v slovenskej spoločnosti. In GBÚROVÁ, M. (ed.). *Politický systém Slovenskej republiky (stav – kontexty – perspektíva)*. Prešov: FF PU, 1997, p. 89.

7 BAČOVÁ, V. Historický a sociálno-psychologický kontext vzťahov medzi etnickými spoločenstvami. In ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.). *Národnostná politika po roku 1989*. Prešov: Universum, 2005, p. 36-45.

tions about ethnicity, language and ethnic identity oscillate towards the concepts of nationalism and patriotism.<sup>8</sup> Nowadays, nationalism is perceived as a negative, intolerant attitude towards other ethnic groups. In the current conditions, its aggressive form is emphasized by the concept of national populism,<sup>9</sup> which is characterized by extreme propaganda and deliberate emphasis on nationality policy, which is done for the benefit of the (usually majority) nation. It includes a dominant politician, a leader who presents themselves (their immediate surroundings, which supports and promotes them in this position) as an unquestionable authority and the protector of national values (traditions, history, culture, language...). However, these politicians see themselves as moderate advocates of national values, protecting national values against foreign influence. Slovak politician R. Sulík, is certainly not a theoretician of nationalism, but in his response to the statements of the Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly L. Kővér, who told Slovak politicians that they should be more confident, said: “*Slovak and Hungarian nationalism do not tolerate each other, but from the inside, both of these phenomena are sociologically very similar. Among other things, it is typical for both of them to consider moderates among themselves as “international forces” and “traitors”, often paid from foreign sources...*”<sup>10</sup>

Dominant “national” leaders consider the terms nationalists and national populists disrespectful. If one accepts the thesis of an exclusive nation-state (“*Slovakia is a state of Slovaks*”), then they consider it normal and self-evident that two Hungarians should seek the permission of a third party in order to exercise their constitutional right to communicate in their mother tongue, even if the communication between them does not concern the third party.<sup>11</sup> Even if we agree that this is not the majority opinion of Slovaks, it is always necessary to see that there is also a group of the population for whom this opinion is acceptable, moreover, if we have it enshrined in the constitution (as well as the Hungarians).

Slovakia is a state of Slovaks, but not only Slovaks. In the conditions of contemporary Europe, patriotism is perceived and presented as positive behaviour, action, attitude, emotion, towards the national state and the nation. The previous state forms, which today’s Slovakia was a part of, also presented themselves as states that expected and demanded manifestations of patriotism and loyalty from their members. However, they mostly considered only members of the largest or ruling nation to be the true patriots.<sup>12</sup> “*National historians do not consider patriotism to be a variant of*

8 VÖRÖS, L. *Analytická historiografia versus národné dejiny: „Národ“ ako sociálna reprezentácia*. Pisa: Plus-Pisa University Press, 2010, p. 73-98. Online: <http://www.forumhistoriae.sk/web/guest/-/analyticka-historiografia-versus-narodne-dejiny>; IRMANOVÁ, E. Fenomén nacionalizmu v maďarsko-slovenských vzťahoch. In *Soudobé dejiny*, 2004, No. 1 – 2, p. 141-153.

9 MESEŽNIKOV, G. – GYARFÁŠOVÁ, O. *Národný populizmus na Slovensku*. Bratislava: IVO, 2008.

10 *Aktuality*, 8. 6. 2011, Kde je minister zahraničných vecí, rozhovor E. Krivošíka s R. Sulíkom, <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/188373/komentar-kde-je-minister-zahranicia/>

11 *Sme*, 10. 12. 2009, Petőcz, K. Mentalita 19. storočia.

12 HALÁSZ, I. Tzv. lojálni Slováci v dualistickom Uhorsku („dobří Slováci“, „úradní Tóti“, uhorskí vlastenci, maďaróni a tí druhí...). In ŠUTAJ, Š. – SZARKA, L. (eds.). *Regionálna a národ-*

*the same phenomenon as nationalism and chauvinism; they are often represented as unrelated or even mutually exclusive phenomena.*"<sup>13</sup>

The ruling political elites in both Slovakia and Hungary still often address (manipulate) the concept of patriotism. The fact that an assimilated Slovak living in Hungary can be and is a good Hungarian patriot is clear to "everyone" in Slovakia, but can a Hungarian living in Slovakia be a good Slovak patriot? The Slovak political elites and representations seriously doubt this. And we have not even started on community patriotism, which can be personified as a characteristic of the entire Hungarian minority. Slovak "nationalists" (nationalist politicians) call Slovak political or opinion opponents who accept the specifics of other ethnic groups (Hungarians) in Slovakia and their civic equality as magyars, renegades and jannisaries. On the other side of the borders, however, political power defines "hostile" groups that have a critical view of the way in which the Hungarian national idea, which transcends borders in the form of a cross-border concept of a united Hungarian nation, is applied. One not hurt by Trianon, one who is against the citizenship of foreign Hungarians cannot be a (good) Hungarian, a patriot. In Hungary, it cannot be a socialist, a liberal (in Slovakia a "slniečkar" – a bleeding heart), a multiculturalist, a globalist or a Jew, fan of George Soros (in Hungary), or a Hungarian (in Slovakia). As can be seen, the scope of the ones "excluded" from patriotism on both sides can be wide and it is marked not only by ethnicity, but also by the political view, social group, or other socio-political characteristics. We can agree with the opinion that *"what is called "patriotism" is part of the social phenomenon of nationalism, or the very notion of patriotism is the product of nationalist discourse.*"<sup>14</sup>

The majority of the population of post-November Czechoslovakia (after 1989) apparently expressed loyalty to the country, considered it their homeland, and yet, at a crucial moment, the political elites chose independence and Slovak patriotism as the principle of further existence. Today it turns out that this principle was generally accepted as the basis for the existence of the Slovak Republic. The reminiscences and arguments of today's Hungarian supporters of the Kingdom and today's Czechoslovak patriots meet at one point. Once this belonged to us, and it results in a feeling of nostalgia for the times when the policy of the Kingdom of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, instead of providing Slovaks with the certainty that the existing state is, or rather was their homeland, provided them "only" with an obligation to be loyal to the state and thus deserve to be able to call this state their homeland. Patriotism can be per-

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*ná identita v maďarskej a slovenskej histórii 18.-20. storočia.* Prešov: Universum, 2007, p. 91-103; FINDOR, A. – KILIÁNOVÁ, G. – KOVÁČ, D. – MACHO, P. – PICHLER, T. Identita a národ. In KILIÁNOVÁ, G. – KOWALSKÁ, E. – KREKOVIČOVÁ, E. (eds.). *My a tí druhí v modernej spoločnosti.* Bratislava: Veda, 2009, p. 229-342; HUDEK, A. – KOPEČEK, M. – MERVART, J. (eds.). *Čechoslovakizmus.* Praha: Lidové noviny, 2020, 408 p.

13 VÖRÖS, L. Vlastenectvo aj šovinizmus, alebo len nacionalizmus? Terminologické a definíčné problémy skúmania nacionalizmov a historická komparácia. In KOVÁČ, D. a kol. *Slovenské dejiny v dejinách Európy. Vybrané kapitoly.* Bratislava: Veda, s. 445 and following.

14 VÖRÖS, L. Vlastenectvo aj šovinizmus, alebo len nacionalizmus?..., p. 336-372.



ceived as an emotion, it is intangible and unenforceable, however, it is manipulable, as documented in the long or short term and in all historical periods.

Dealing with the ambiguity of concepts related to ethnicity is an extremely difficult task. Especially when the scientific need to clarify, purify, demystify concepts clashes with the fact that they have already taken on a different form in practical public life. They are used to denote certain phenomena, relationships and this is how we find them in political or public discourse.

We will use the term nationalism to express an ideology and policy that favours a nation or ethnicity in the application of various types of policies. People who use nationalism as one of the most essential tools of their policy then assign a connotation to it, which allows us to determine the nature, scope and acceptance of a policy in a rather simplified way and with a degree of generalization based on data, fact and action analysis.

In Slovak conditions, we encounter specifics in nationality policy and the issue of national minorities, which also appear in connection with the issue of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. Differences of opinion on the minority issue are reflected in the very designation of minorities (nationality/national/ethnic) and their definition. The term minority is considered disrespectful in some minority circles, the term nationality is considered to be multifaceted (used during the period of socialism), and thus impractical. Hungarians in Slovakia tend to use the term national minority, which describes their affiliation with the Hungarian nation, which they feel part of and are currently separated from it by the border created by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. However, it also defines the situation in which they find themselves in the present.<sup>15</sup> The Hungarian historian L. Szarka tried to briefly explain the difference in terminological perception (for the purposes of an interview with the political scientist J. Marušiak). The term “national minority” is and will certainly remain a debatable concept, as we can define this type of minority differently by different methodological approaches. The problem of the discrepancy between the Slovak term “nationality” and the Hungarian “nemzeti” (i.e. national) is not burdened as much conceptually as it is interpreted in various political expressions. *“In the Slovak political discourse, national minorities are a kind of unclear groups that have different “national” characteristics than the majority nation, while in the case of Hungarian political interpretation they are minorities that have dominant Hungarian national ties in the structure of their identity.”*<sup>16</sup>

In the European context, the often-used concept is the definition given in the Recommendation of the Council of Europe No. 1201/1993 “Additional Protocol on the

15 ŠUTAJ, Š. Variace stop Trianonu v politické paměti. In DEJMEK, J. – LOUŽEK, M. (eds.). *Trianonská smlouva. Devadesát let poté*. Praha: Centrum pro ekonomiku a politiku, 2010, p. 69-97.

16 Investori odídu a nám zstanú národnostné ťahanice (rozhovor J. Marušiaka s L. Szarkom), [http://www.despiteborders.com/clanok.php?subaction=showfull&id=1240880506&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=3,4,10&](http://www.despiteborders.com/clanok.php?subaction=showfull&id=1240880506&archive=&start_from=&ucat=3,4,10&)

Rights of Minorities to the European Convention on Human Rights”.<sup>17</sup> It was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in November 1994, signed on 1 February 1995 and the Additional Protocol was adopted in 1996. “*National minority is the group of persons in a State which a) resides in its territory, b) maintains long-term, close and lasting ties with the State, c) exhibits specific ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics, d) is sufficiently representative, although smaller in number than the rest the population of a State or a region of that State, (e) is motivated by an interest in the common preservation of what constitutes its common identity, including its culture, traditions, religion or language*”. Many European countries have had reservations about this decision, it is therefore only of a recommendatory nature. The Council of Europe has stated that no consensus can be found on the interpretation of the term “*national minority/minorité nationale*” and it is therefore not part of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.<sup>18</sup>

Even in political practice, however, some politicians of Hungarian nationality favour the use of the term national (národná) minority. Also in case of the designation of the inhabitant of Slovakia of Hungarian nationality, it is upon political consideration which name is correct, more politically correct or more advantageous. An inhabitant/citizen of Slovakia of Hungarian nationality,<sup>19</sup> Hungarian in Slovakia, Slovak Hungarian. The answers vary.<sup>20</sup> In our opinion, the designation Hungarians in Slovakia (Slovak Hungarians) is the most appropriate and we will use the term national (národnostná) minority in the publication to describe the community of Hungarians in Slovakia.

The issue of self-identification was addressed in Most-Híd’s program “*Civic Vision 2016. A Strategy of National Policy for Hungarians Living in Slovakia*”. The program generally designates this group as a national (národnostná) minority. At the same time, it defines it as a “*community of Hungarians in Slovakia*” as a “*part of the Hungarian cultural nation*” and a “*community without a common name*”. They propose to use the name “*szlovákiai magyarok*” – “*Hungarians in Slovakia*” or “*dolyszlovákiai magyarok*” – “*Hungarians in southern Slovakia*” to designate this community.<sup>21</sup>

17 Recommendation 1201 (1993). On an additional protocol on the rights of minorities to the European Convention on Human Rights. Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. <http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?link=/documents/adoptedtext/ta93/erecl201.htm>

18 FERENČUHOVÁ, B. Stav výskumu medzinárodnej ochrany národnostných menšín na Slovensku po roku 1989. In ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.). *Národ a národnosti na Slovensku – stav výskumu po roku 1989 a jeho perspektívy*. Prešov: Universum, 2004, p. 13-30.

19 MACHÁČEK, L. Výsledky z výskumu občanov SR maďarskej národnosti. In *Studia Politica Slovaca*, 2010, vol. 3, No. 2, p. 54-79; MACHÁČEK, L. Slovak republic and its Hungarian Ethnic Minority: Sociological Reflections. In *Slovenská politologická revue*, 2011, 11, 3, p. 187-210.

20 JÍLEK, D. Pokus o definování právního pojmu „národnostní menšina“ podle výkladových prohlášení smluvních stran k Rámcové úmluvě o ochraně národnostních menšin z roku 1995. In *Národnostní menšiny a majoritní společnost v České republice a v zemích střední Evropy v 90. letech XX. století*. Opava – Praha: Slezský ústav SZM, 1998, p. 15-19;

21 Občianska vízia 2016. Stratégia národnostnej politiky pre Maďarov žijúcich na Slovensku, p. 40-41. <http://most-hid.sk/sites/most-hid.sk/downloadabl/filesov/madarska/narodnost/0/pdf.pdf>. According to the results of the research presented in this document, 53 % of respondents

With regard to the name of the state body, which existed until 1918 in the territory of today's Slovakia, we will use the terms Royal Hungary, the Kingdom of Hungary, or the Habsburg Monarchy, Austria-Hungary, which are used by Slovak historiography. If necessary, given the specifics of the topic and in the context of the perception of this body by Hungarian historiography and current Hungarian policy, we will also use the term historic Hungary or the Hungarian Kingdom.

This raises the question of the territory where the inhabitants of Hungarian nationality live in Slovakia. It is southern Slovakia, the Slovak south. Although these are geographical denominations, the term "Slovak South" had a strong political undertone in the post-war period, used by the Slovak elites to demonstrate their unquestionable affinity for Slovakia. Very often, the designations of former counties (Gemery, Abov, Zemplín ...) which, although they have not been officially used for a long time, have remained popular among the population and are used to indicate regional identity even today.<sup>22</sup> Less popular is the designation of the current higher territorial units, which even in the several years since their introduction have not been fully established in the public space. The most problematic and controversial, especially from the Slovak point of view, is the name Upper Land (Felvidék). In reality, Felvidék, as a geographical and political body disappeared together with the Kingdom of Hungary in 1918. From a political point of view, it signals affiliation to the former Kingdom of Hungary and it is adequate to use it in this historical context. In current political practice, however, it is an anachronism and it is incorrect to use it to indicate a geographical or political situation. In the political practice of Hungarian elites, it used to be a custom to diplomatically avoid such a designation of Slovakia, but this is not the case in general. On the contrary, at present, the use of the term Felvidék is a sign of patriotism towards Hungary, an expression of opposition to the post-Trianon arrangement. It is used by the official Hungarian politics, representatives of the directions in the Hungarian minority, who want to emphasize the injustice of the minority position. Especially in Budapest, such a label from the mouths of not only Hungarian politicians, but also politicians living in Slovakia, is part of the "good education".<sup>23</sup> The afore-mentioned Civic Vision 2016 also deals with the name of the territory in which Hungarians live in Slovakia. They consider the use of the name "*Dél-Szlovákia*" – "*Southern Slovakia*" to be the most appropriate. "*Southern Slovakia is made up of regions where Hungarians live in larger numbers, however, not only Hungarians live within its borders, but also large numbers of Slovaks and Roma. The borders of*

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felt that they were "Hungarians in Slovakia", 37 % felt to be Hungarians (without any attributes) and 5 % considered themselves Hungarians in Felvidék. RÁKÓCZI, K. Parlamenti választások Szlovákiában: meggyengült hagyományos pártok és apátiába esett magyar választók. In *Magyar kisebbség*, 2016, No. 3, p. 68-80. [https://epa.oszk.hu/02100/02169/00053/pdf/EPA02169\\_magyar\\_kisebbsseg\\_2016\\_3\\_068-080.pdf](https://epa.oszk.hu/02100/02169/00053/pdf/EPA02169_magyar_kisebbsseg_2016_3_068-080.pdf)

22 ŠUTAJ Š. Problémy etnickej identity: lokálna, regionálna a národná identita. In KOVÁČOVÁ, A. (ed.). *Identita, história a kultúra. Dejiny Slovákov na Dolnej zemi*. Budapešť – Békešská Čaba: Výskumný ústav Slovákov v Maďarsku, 2011, p. 26-40.

23 We will also address the issue in relation to Hungarian national policy in a separate part of the publication.

*Southern Slovakia are not necessarily the same as the current administrative division.*"<sup>24</sup>

For the most part and during most Slovak governments, politicians in the discussions did not perceive nationality policy as a solution to the problems of the Hungarian minority, but as a solution to the problems with the Hungarian minority. Basic values and philosophical issues were not addressed. What is the place of Hungarians in Slovak society and in the Slovak Republic. How to create such living conditions for them that they are unquestionably equal and thus loyal citizens of the state, whose place, role and rights are not questioned because they speak a different language. Through its policy, Hungary has made it clear and unambiguous that it is interested in Hungarians abroad and perceives them as part of the Hungarian nation. The mother state – the mother nation has always played an important role in this process, creating the conditions for the interconnection of the minority and the Hungarian state, striving to maintain contacts and connections, and the new European policy under the EU supervision creating optimal conditions for this (this is a statement, not a reprehension). Slovak political representatives also discussed the issue of the Hungarian national minority in Slovakia more often with representatives of the Hungarian state than with the representatives of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. Basic agreement - the Agreement on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Hungary from 1995 also established the institutional platform of the Mixed Slovak-Hungarian Commission for Minority Issues.

An essential element of addressing problems, including ethnic ones, is the way in which the problem is communicated. War is also a way of communication, but it also means closing in and ignoring stimuli from the environment. In the Slovak-Hungarian story of the monitored years we find various types of communication and answers to problems that deserve attention: demonstrations, protests, defiance, resistance, consensus or subordination, lethargy. However, on both sides of the border we can also observe narcissistic (pontifical) self-satisfaction with own "perfection" and the solutions adopted to satisfy its own supporters at the expense of "the others". Solutions that heroically and patriotically eliminate the "insoluble" and "extremely important" problems in a closed bubble, which are in fact a problem only for a small circle of people living in this bubble. The only possible solution to the problems is the dialogue between the groups involved at the official level, participation in communicating real problems in political practice and creating space for such dialogue. It was exactly circumvention of existing problems that was a frequent way of "solving" existing problems. But, as L. Öllös, the Chairman of the Forum of the Institute for Minority Research, wrote: *"There is a widespread presumption that it only deepens the tension, so there is no need to talk so much about them. Sweeping problems under the rug is not the solution.*"<sup>25</sup> However, whether minority issues were or were not

24 Občianska vízia 2016. Stratégia národnostnej politiky pre Maďarov..., p. 40-41.

25 *Aktuality*, 26. 11. 2012, V SR nie sú ideálne podmienky na sebarealizáciu menšín, <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/218348/okruhly-stol-madarov-v-sr-nie-su-idealne-podmienky-na-sebarealizaciu-mensin/>

addressed, even at a time when minority representations were part of the government, the argument of “*maintaining a fragile government coalition*” did not allow for solutions (proposals for laws), but also for discussions of fundamental issues of the state’s relationship to minorities and the relationship of minorities to the state.

However, Slovak and Hungarian politics and often also the Hungarian minority addressed Trianon, the board law, school certificates, pedagogical documentation, or geographical names. These certainly serious, but in fact substitute problems, mostly obscured the unclear essence of the Slovak-Hungarian interstate relationship. The legislation also relied on details, without clarifying the state’s relationship with minorities (e.g. in the preamble to the Constitution, but also in relation to, for example, the law on the state language and the law on the language of national minorities). The law on national minorities never really got on the agenda of the day, it remained as a marketing electoral symbol in the programs of Hungarian political parties.<sup>26</sup> There was a similar situation with the (non-existent) attempt to define the nationality policy of Slovakia, which would create the preconditions for such a law. This is also one of the reasons why we will focus on the various types of “dialogues” (sometimes also monologues) that have happened on different lines of social and political life. These will not form the basic structure of this publication, they will form an instrumental and relational framework, allowing for, if not understanding, then at least empathic perception of the problem.

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26 Art. 34 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic regulates the right to all-round development, especially the right to develop one’s own culture together with other members of a national minority or ethnic group, the right to disseminate and receive information in their mother tongue, to associate in national associations, to establish and maintain educational and cultural institutions; right to education in the languages of national minorities, the right to use the language of a national minority in official communication and the right to participate in the resolution of matters concerning national minorities and ethnic groups. These rights are included among the fundamental rights and freedoms, i.e. they are inalienable, imprescriptible and irrevocable and cannot be the subject of a referendum (Article 93 par. 3 of the Constitution). These rights are guaranteed by a number of different pieces of legislation. Some experts considered that a separate law on the status of national minorities in Slovakia is possible, but not necessary, as it is replaced by a wide range of laws concerning national minorities that regulate their status to a sufficient extent and in accordance with the required European standard. Another group of lawyers, a significant part of which were lawyers who belonged to national minorities, supported the alternative of drafting a separate law on the status of national minorities, which would bring together all legal norms concerning national minorities in one place, define essential definitions and their interpretation, harmonize them and thus create a comprehensive law that clearly defines the rights and obligations of persons belonging to national minorities. It was not possible to enforce such a law from the position of a coalition party during the entire period under review, because relations within the ruling coalitions, in which the Hungarian party was a minority, were tense and the law proposal would cause disruption in government groups and impending disintegration. Sporadically, proposals for the adoption of a law on the status of national minorities appeared when the parties involved were in opposition or outside the parliament. (OROSZ, L. Maďarská národnostná menšina na Slovensku a legislatívne zmeny v jej postavení po roku 1989. In *Človek a spoločnosť*, 2008, Vol. 11, No. 4. <http://www.saske.sk/cas/4-2008/index.html>)

## Demographic Context of the Position of the Hungarian Minority in Slovakia

The successor states after the First World War seized the notion of the nation-state with such intensity that they significantly changed the ethnic map of Central Europe over the course of a century.<sup>27</sup> Some countries were “more successful” (e.g. Hungary and Poland, the Czech Republic), others, despite enormous efforts, were less successful (Romania, Slovakia) in their work towards the “unification” of the ethnicity of the country’s population. They tried in various ways. They made an effort to assimilate or expel ethnically inconvenient population from the country, or to revise the “agreed” borders to incorporate their “peers” into their nation state. A number of works are focused on the historical and demographic context and the development of the Hungarian minority, these are also recorded in regular population censuses.<sup>28</sup>

Significant changes also affected the population of southern Slovakia. Despite the post-war efforts to slovakize southern Slovakia, the population of Hungarian nationality defended its ethnic identity against the post-war and socialist assimilation activities and a high proportion of the population of Hungarian nationality remained. From the census in 1961 until 1991, the proportion of the population of Hungarian nationality in the total population of Slovakia steadily decreased, although their number increased slightly. During the census in 1961, the number and share of the population of Hungarian nationality increased, mainly due to the expected return of part of the population, which applied for reslovakization in the years 1946 – 1948. According to the results of the 2001 census, the absolute number of Hungarian nationals in Slovakia decreased to a significant extent for the first time since the 1950 census. In the

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27 See e.g. map annexes prepared by GLATZ, F. *Minorities in East-Central Europe. Historical Analysis and a Policy Proposal*. Budapest: Europa Institut, 1993.

28 Of the most important ones that deal with demographic data concerning Slovak Hungarians, we mention: MAJO, J. – ŠPROCHA, B. *Storočie populačného vývoja Slovenska II.: populačné štruktúry*. Bratislava: Infostat – Výskumné demografické centrum, 2013, 126 p; GYURGYÍK, L. *Népszámlálás 2001: a szlovákiai magyarság demográfiai, valamint település-és társadalomszerkezetének változásai az 1990-es években*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2006; GYURGYÍK, L. *A szlovákiai magyarság demográfiai folyamatai 1989-től 2011-ig. Különös tekintettel a 2001- től napjainkig terjedő időszakra*. Somorja: Fórum Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2014; GABZDILOVÁ, S.– SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku – pohľad do minulosti a súčasný stav*. In ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.) *Národ a národnosti na Slovensku – stav výskumu po roku 1989 a jeho perspektívy*. Prešov, Universum, 2004, p. 117-125; ŠUTAJ, Š. *Sociálno-demografické charakteristiky maďarskej menšiny na Slovensku*. In ŠUTAJ, Š. a kol. *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku po roku 1989*. Prešov: Universum, 2008, 216 p.; ŠUTAJ, S. *Changes of national identity in historical development*. In PLICHTOVA, J. *Minorities in Politics*. Bratislava 1992, p. 180-187; ŠUTAJ, Š. – BAČOVÁ, V. *Reslovakisation. The Changes of Nationality and Ethnic Identity in Historical Development in Slovak - Hungarian Environment*. In *Small Nations and Ethnic Minorities in an Emerging Europe*. München: Slavica Verlag dr. Anton Kováč, 1993, p. 239-243.

past, the application of the principle of political and economic advantage, or changing the ethnicity of the population in the south of Slovakia significantly contributed to the changes in declaring ethnicity.<sup>29</sup> Under political pressure, the part of the population that was bilingual and had an ethnic background in both the Hungarian and Slovak ethnic groups reported to the ethnic group that was in a more advantageous position in the existing state.<sup>30</sup>

Much more significant changes in the ethnic structure of southern Slovakia took place as a result of economic and political developments after 1989. After 1989, this population expected possible changes in the position of the Hungarian minority, so they were stable in determining their ethnicity, which was reflected in the slight increase in the number of people declaring Hungarian nationality in the 1991 census. In the 2001 census, this factor was no longer influential to such an extent and part of the population declared a different nationality. This is a phenomenon that has been observed in the south of Slovakia throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and can also be described as statistical assimilation.

Table No. 1 Count of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia<sup>31</sup>

Nationalities	1950	1961	1970	1980
Slovaks	2 982 524	3 560 216	3 878 904	4 317 008
%	86,8	85,3	85,5	86,5
Hungarians	354 532	518 782	552 006	559 490
%	10,3	12,4	12,2	11,2
Total	3 492 317	4174046	4 537 290	4 991168

29 ŠUTAJ, Š. The Development of the Hungarian, Ukrainian and Russian Minorities in Slovakia between the years 1970 – 1991. In *International Issues*, 1992, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 53-62; ŠUTAJ, S. Changes of national identity in historical development. In PLICHTOVÁ, J. Minorities in Politics. Bratislava 1992, p. 180-187. SRB, V. Assimilace a překlánění národnosti obyvatelstva v Československu ve světle sčítání lidu 1950 – 1991. In *Demografie*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 3, p. 157-164.

30 ŠUTAJ, Š. *Reslovakizácia. Zmena národnosti časti obyvateľstva Slovenska po II. svetovej vojne*. Košice: SvÚ SAV, 1991; ŠUTAJ, Š. – BAČOVÁ, V. Reslovakisation. The Changes of Nationality and Ethnic Identity in Historical Development in Slovak-Hungarian Environment. In *Small Nations and Ethnic Minorities in an Emerging Europe*. München: Slavica Verlag dr. Anton Kováč, 1993, p. 239-243; POPÉLY, Á. Výmena obyvateľstva medzi Československom a Maďarskom a menné záznamy Maďarov určených na presídlenie. In *Človek a spoločnosť*, 2009, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 4; ŠUTAJ, Š. Slovakia and the Hungarian Minority between 1945 and 1948. In ŠUTAJ, Š. et al. Key Issues of Slovak and Hungarian History (A View of Slovak Historians). Prešov: Universum, 2011, p. 227-244; ŠUTAJ, Š. Slovakia and Hungarians in Slovakia in the Aftermath of World War II, 1945-1948. In SUPPAN, A. (Hg.). *Auflösung historischer Konflikte im Donauraum*. Festschrift für Ferenc Glatz zum 70. Geburtstag. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2011, p. 619-633; KÖVÉR, György. „Statistical Assimilation“ in the Hungarian Kingdom 1880 – 1910. In *Romanian Journal of Populatin Studies*, vol X, No. 2, 2016, p. 71-118.

31 Národnostná štruktúra obyvateľstva SR. (predbežné výsledky sčítania 1991). Bratislava: Slovenský štatistický úrad, 1992; Census of Population, Houses and Dwellings 2001. <http://www.statistics.sk/webdata/slov/scitanie>.

In 2011, there was a Census of Population, Houses and Dwellings in Slovakia. Among the data collected, there was also information on nationality, mother tongue and the most frequently used language. In the census, nationality meant the affiliation of a person to a nation, national or ethnic minority. To determine nationality, the decisive factor was the inhabitant's own declaration of ethnicity. The nationality of children under 15 was reported according to their parents. If the parents declared different nationalities, the nationality of one of them was attributed to their children (by mutual agreement of the parents). The mother tongue was the language which the resident's parents spoke to the resident in their childhood. In the case of different parents' languages, the one spoken to the child by their mother was registered. The information on the mother tongue did not have to be identical to the information on nationality.<sup>32</sup>

The most commonly used language in public was the language most commonly used by the resident today. The most commonly used language in private was the language most often used by the resident at home. This figure was monitored for the first time in the census of 2011. In addition to the state language, the census forms were distributed in Hungarian, Romani, Ruthenian and Ukrainian, and also in English in electronic form.<sup>33</sup> The whole census was organized in the spirit of the principles of Article 3 of the *Framework Convention*, according to which: "1. Every person belonging to a national minority has the right to choose freely whether or not to be treated as a person belonging to a national minority, and no disadvantage will arise from this choice or the exercise of the rights associated with that choice. 2. Persons belonging to national minorities may exercise the rights and enjoy the freedoms resulting from the principles enshrined in this Framework Convention, both individually and jointly with others."<sup>34</sup>

Table No. 2 Ethnic composition of the population of the Slovak Republic according to the census in 1991, 2001 and 2011

Total resident population	1991		2001		2011	
	abs.	in %	abs.	in %	abs.	in %
	5 274 335	100,0	5 379 455	100,0	5 397 036	100,0
Nationality						
Slovak	4 519 328	85,7	4 614 854	85,8	4 352 775	80,7
Hungarian	567 296	10,8	520 528	9,7	458 467	8,5
Unascertained	8 782	0,2	54 502	1,0	382 493	7,0

Source: Statistic Office of the SR

32 Source: [http://www.statistics.sk/webdata/scitanie/def\\_sr/run.html](http://www.statistics.sk/webdata/scitanie/def_sr/run.html)

33 Fourth Report on the Implementation of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* in the Slovak Republic, p. 5.

34 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities  
<https://www.noveaspi.sk/products/lawText/1/46732/1/2>



Table No. 3 Population of the SR according to the mother tongue – census 2001, 2011

Resident population	2001		2011	
	abs.	in %	abs.	in %
<b>Total</b>	5 379 455	100,0	5 397 036	100,0
<b>Mother tongue</b>				
Slovak	4 512 217	83,9	4 240 453	78,6
Hungarian	572 929	10,7	508 714	9,4
Unascertained	66 056	1,2	405 261	7,5

Source: Statistic Office of the SR

According to demographer L. Gyurgyík, the decrease in the number and proportion of the Hungarian population within the population of Slovakia was caused mainly by the decline in the birth rate of the Hungarian population, hidden migration and assimilation. These changes affected the structure of municipalities with a dominant Hungarian population. The number of such municipalities has decreased significantly.<sup>35</sup> According to the results of the 2011 census, the proportion of Hungarian nationals did not increase in any of the districts in Slovakia in comparison to the previous censuses. Due to the intention of not creating larger territorial units with a significant proportion of the population of Hungarian nationality in the 90s, the proportion in none of the self-governing regions the proportion of the population of Hungarian nationality is over 25 % (the highest proportion is in Trnava region 21.8 %, Nitra region 24.6 %, Banská Bystrica region 10.2 %).<sup>36</sup>

The census, in addition to providing important data for statistics and demography, is also a testament to the development of the population in the monitored area. It is important for determining economic trends, social and health policy. It also has a fundamental influence on the nationality/minority policy of the state. It provides important data that are the basis for determination of the number of representatives in the advisory body of the government (Government Council, VNMES – Council for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups) It is also the basis to determine the municipalities in which it is possible to use the language of a national minority, coefficients for calculating the level of subsidies for national minorities for culture and other.

When comparing the censuses from previous years and the last census, many trends interesting for the characteristics of Slovak society and the position of national minorities were shown, confirmed or indicated. One of the most important trends is that the proportion of the largest ethnic communities in the population is declin-

35 GYURGYÍK, L. Zmeny v demografickej, sídelnej a sociálnej štruktúre Maďarov na Slovensku. In FAZEKAS, J. – HUNČÍK, P. (eds.). *Maďari na Slovensku (1984 – 2004). Súhrnná správa. Od zmeny režimu po vstup do Európskej únie*. Šamorín: Fórum inštitút pre výskum menšín, 2008, p. 155-198; ŠUTAJ, Š. The Development of the Hungarian, Ukrainian and Russian Minorities in Slovakia between the years 1970 – 1991. In *International Issues* 1, 1992, 3, 53-62.

36 Fourth Report on the Implementation of the *European Charter* in the Slovak Republic..., p. 9.

ing. Slovaks and Hungarians have disappeared. In the case of Slovaks, this decline has been significant in the last decade, when their share fell by 5.1 %, i.e. more than 250,000 inhabitants. The number of Hungarians in Slovakia has been declining for a long time in terms of the proportion of the population, as well as in terms of absolute numbers. However, the development of the decline is not as fast as it was for Slovaks. The year 1980 was the last year in which the population of Hungarian nationality increased. At that time, 559,490 people declared this nationality. While in 1991 there were 567,296 inhabitants (10.8 %) declaring Hungarian nationality, in 2001 it was 520,528 (9.7 %) and in 2011 there were 458,467 inhabitants, making up 8.5 % of the population of Slovakia. In twenty years, their number decreased by 108,831 people. The “most popular” explanation for this situation on both Slovak and Hungarian sides is the mutual assimilation between these ethnic groups. However, it is necessary to consider the increase in the population that declares Roma nationality and Romani language. In the case of Slovaks, only part of increase in Ruthenian nationality is compensated by the decrease of Ukrainians, and the rest is compensated by Slovak nationality. A very important factor is the fact that part of the population did not state any ethnicity or mother tongue. While in 1991 there were 8782 people (0.2 %) who did not state any nationality, in 2001 there were already 54 502 inhabitants (1.0 %) and in 2011 there were up to 382 493 inhabitants (7.0 %). This applies not only to the acceptance of nationality, but also to the mother tongue. In 2001, this information was not reported by 66,056 inhabitants (1.2 %), but in 2011 it was 405,261 inhabitants (7.5 %). The reasons may vary, but we can certainly include the fact that part of the population considers nationality to be confidential information related to their personal integrity.<sup>37</sup> The second reason is that it was not possible to give two answers in the census and part of the population of Slovakia has (at least) a double ethnic identity. This is the result of the ethnic mix of the population, which, due to the influence of historical development, has diverse historical ethnic roots (urban German population, Slovak-Polish, Slovak-Hungarian and Slovak-Ruthenian, Jewish, but also other migration waves of a smaller scale – Greeks, Bulgarians, Croats, Russians ...). The misuse of censuses in post-war legislation can also still raise suspicion in providing information on ethnic or denominational identity.

Another important information is that the share of the population with the Hungarian mother tongue (10.7 %) is higher than the share of the population of Hungarian nationality (9.7 %). At the same time, however, only 8.7 % of the population used the Hungarian language at home, indicating a high proportion of ethnically mixed families. The fact that children under the age of 16 make up 20.4 % of the population of

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37 This trend is typical not only for Slovakia. An enormous number of respondents with undeclared language (or national) affiliation was also recorded in the censuses in Hungary: there were 541 106 and 570 537 people in 2001, and in 2011 there were even up to 1 443 840 and 1 463 887 people. (LAJTAI, M. Nemzetiségi viszonyok és statisztikai adatgyűjtés Magyarországon. In *Statisztikai Szemle*, 2020, 98, 6, p. 547-572. [http://www.ksh.hu/statszemle\\_archive/all/2020/2020\\_06/2020\\_06\\_547.pdf](http://www.ksh.hu/statszemle_archive/all/2020/2020_06/2020_06_547.pdf))

Slovak nationality while making up only for 15.92 % of the population of Hungarian nationality, also plays an important role.

The educational structure of the population of Hungarian nationality is also unfavourable. The Hungarian minority lags behind mainly in the number of university-educated people. While the share of university-educated people in the population of Slovak nationality is 8.24 %, it is only 4.54 % in the population of Hungarian nationality. Thus, it is still not possible to overcome the differences that historically formed in the previous periods.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, with regard to completed basic education among the population of Hungarian nationality, the share of the population with completed only basic education is 30.49 %, while for the population of Slovak nationality it is 19.66 %. There have been positive shifts compared to the results of the 1991 census, but the differences in educational attainment have not changed.

The experts and representatives of political parties also expected confirmation of the trend of further reduction of the share and number of inhabitants of Hungarian nationality in the population of Slovakia. As already mentioned, given that the number of identified members of minorities also has an impact on their position and funding, the census became part of the political struggle. Civic activists and political parties tried to campaign among the people of Slovakia to persuade the citizens to declare “*their*” ethnic group. In March 2011, Most-Híd launched an intensive campaign before the May census. They wanted to do it on a larger scale, not only as a campaign among Hungarians, they also appealed to Ruthenians and the Roma to “*confess to the nationality to which they belong*”. They did so through cultural events, special field events, and advertising in the press. The Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia (RHS) also joined the campaign in the south of Slovakia as an “*umbrella organization of civic associations and organizations of Hungarians in Slovakia*”, which also appealed to political parties to campaign together.<sup>39</sup>

The last census took place during the I. Radičová’s government in 2011 and became the subject of political controversy. Prior to the preparation of the census, HZDS Chairman V. Mečiar accused Deputy Prime Minister R. Chmel of helping RHS and Hungarian political parties to recruit people to declare their Hungarian nationality in the campaign. Mečiar said: “*They started doing it in three directions. The first recruitment for people to declare only Hungarian nationality. The second is focused on mixed partnerships and the third is to transform the Roma into Hungarian nationality. When they speak Hungarian, they should declare their Hungarian nationality. The whole campaign is organized by the two parties together with the Deputy Prime Minister Chmel. He spends the money he received to support minorities for such a campaign. This could discredit the whole census.*”<sup>40</sup>

38 Census of Population, Houses and Dwellings 2001. <http://www.statistics.sk/webdata/slov/scitanie>

39 *Aktuality*, 19. 2. 2011, Pred sčítaním budú robiť kampaň aj medzi Rusínmi a Rómami.

40 *Aktuality*, 13. 5. 2011, Chmel by mal byť odvolaný. <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/186984/meciar-chmel-by-mal-byt-odvolany/>

RHS carried out a really strong information campaign shortly before the census. In 530 municipalities in Slovakia, where the Hungarian minority lived, as well as in the centre of Košice and in four city parts of Bratislava, they distributed a campaign information brochure entitled “*Everyone counts*” to household mailboxes. It appealed to Hungarians in Slovakia to declare Hungarian as their nationality and as their mother tongue in the census forms. The information leaflet emphasized that all depends on the number of people declaring Hungarian nationality (use of the Hungarian language, amount of subsidies, future development of the regions...). The campaign was supported by organizations uniting Hungarian nationality civic movements, several non-profit organizations, Church associations and the political parties Most-Híd and SMK joined.<sup>41</sup>

Concerns arose among the representation of Hungarian nationality after the announcement of the results of the census, although such results could be expected. The reaction of Hungarian political leaders tended to transfer responsibility to the Slovak minority policy. However, there was no attempt by the official authorities to influence the minorities’ negative declaration of nationality or mother tongue. On the contrary, minority civic and political organizations carried out great, state-supported promotion of reporting minority nationalities and minority languages. Nevertheless, the idea that the government policy should save the alarming demographic status of minorities prevailed in the reactions of dissatisfied political leaders. The results of the census were already published at a time when the second government of R. Fico was in power. The chairman of the SMK, J. Berényi, stated that if Slovakia wants to be a democratic country, then its silent or secret goal cannot be for the Hungarian minority to disappear. According to him, the Slovak Republic will be truly democratic only if the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister, after such a finding, calls a round table to discuss the tools to eliminate this trend. “*Here is an alarming result – a result that says that in 60 or 70 years, the Hungarian minority may be very marginal, small, insignificant*”<sup>42</sup> However, the Prime Minister did not call the round table. Also due to the fact that the number of Slovaks decreased even more than those of the Hungarians. It would be very surprising if he organized rescue operations for the Slovak Hungarians within the official policy of the “status quo” and the real policy of national populism.

At the same time, however, it must be stated that, regardless of the opinions and actions of political authorities, the issue was addressed by the structures created by the state for monitoring nationality policy.

The report on the status and rights of persons belonging to national minorities in 2012 identified natural population decline, migratory movements and natural assimi-

41 *Aktuality*, 11. 5. 2011, Okružly stól Maďarov spustil kampaň, <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/186895/okruhly-stol-madarov-spustil-kampan-pred-scitanim-ludu/>

42 *Aktuálne*, 24. 9. 2012, (SITA) SMK a Most podpísali dokument..., <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/smk-a-most-podpisali-dokument-o-rozvoji-madarov-o-zblizovani-vraj-hovorit-nemozno/slovensko/politika/>; *Webnoviny*, 24. 9. 2012, SMK a Most-Híd trápi úbytok obyvateľstva <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/smk-a-most-hid-trapi-ubytok-madarov/546677-clanok.html>

lation (mixed marriages) as the main factor in the decline of Hungarians in Slovakia. From a demographic point of view, the population of the Slovak Republic of Hungarian nationality is characterized by a relatively low number of people in the pre-productive age – aged 5 – 9 years, where only 3.9 % of members of the Hungarian national minority are registered. On the other hand, there are 8.4 % of people in the age group 55 – 59. This type of age structure is called the regressive type and it is very negative in terms of preserving the population in a natural way.<sup>43</sup> On 16 October 2013, the Government of the Slovak Republic “dealt” with the report on the position of national minorities in Slovakia in 2012, but did not pay special attention to the demographic changes. The information was duly noted.<sup>44</sup>

In 2012, the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities L. Nagy, in a dispute with the chairman of the SMK J. Berényi, perceived the decline of the population of Hungarian nationality as a sum of various factors. “*The causes such as the social atmosphere, which changed according to the political situation, are often mentioned. But one obvious reason does not exist, I perceive it rather as a package of factors.*”<sup>45</sup> On one hand, the declining population of Hungarian nationality became an important argument for the thesis on the assimilation policy of Slovak nationality policy, but at the same time, it was motivating for short-term reflections on the joint action of Hungarian political parties and civic representation in RHS. In 2012, one of the incentives for signing a joint declaration of the “*Hungarian minority minimum*” between the SMK and Most-Híd and the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia with the distinctive title “*Basic conditions for the survival and development of Hungarians in Slovakia*”.<sup>46</sup> Therein, the political parties overcame the personal and party aversions for a very short period of time and accepted RHS’s efforts to find effective and reasonable solutions, so that they would not have to report another decrease in the Hungarian population in Slovakia in ten years. In addition to the common policy (but not the unification of the Hungarian authorities), they also saw solutions in political solutions that would fulfil the ambitions of the Hungarian representations with regard to a greater degree of self-government. According to them, the decrease of Hungarians in Slovakia justifies the need to build an institutional system in culture and education that has self-governing capacities – i.e. school and cultural self-government and the use of legal means available to minorities. They considered the improvement of living conditions to be important, thus eliminating the economic and social backwardness of the southern regions, which are mainly inhabited by members of the Hungarian community.<sup>47</sup> The whole set of problems that have contrib-

43 Report on the Status and Rights of Members of National Minorities for 2012, p. 30-31.

44 Resolutions from the meeting of the Government of the Slovak Republic on 16 October 2013 <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/10259/1>; *Aktuálne*, 16. 10. 2013, Počet Maďarov na Slovensku..., <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/pocet-madarov-na-slovensku-od-roku-1991-klesol-o-takmer-100-tisic/slovensko/spolocnost/>

45 *Pravda*, 19. 6. 2012, Maďarov je menej. U nás aj v Maďarsku.

46 *Pravda*, 25. 9. 2012, (SITA) Most a SMK podpísali deklaráciu.

47 *Webnoviny*, 24. 9. 2012, SMK a Most-Híd trápi úbytok obyvateľstva <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/smk-a-most-hid-trapi-ubytok-madarov/546677-clanok.html>

uted to the decrease in the population of Hungarian nationality has a broader background and these undoubtedly include economic reasons. *“Impulses for development in southern Slovakia are minimal, unemployment is high, morbidity is rising, educated youth is leaving. All this, of course, also applies to Slovaks living in southern Slovakia. The Hungarian community in Slovakia is in crisis. And it is not only due to the fact that in 20 years the population of Hungarian nationality in Slovakia has decreased by more than a hundred thousand people.”*<sup>48</sup> Politicians also saw the causes in the above-mentioned demographic factors and economic reasons, but they tried to find them in political reasons related to demographic factors as well. According to the then Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities L. Nagy, *“People from underdeveloped regions go to other parts of Slovakia for work, while young people go abroad.”* With regard to mixed marriages, he saw a problem in the fact that parents often declare Slovak nationality for their children.<sup>49</sup> This factor has long been known among demographers and it is reflected both in emigration and in ethnically mixed regions. The total population of Slovakia has increased only minimally. The population is aging, the proportion of divorced people is also growing. During the monitored decade, there was an increase of only 17,581 inhabitants and the growth of 0.33 % over the decade was the lowest in the history of Slovakia. According to sociologist Z. Kusá, the reason for the decrease in the population of Hungarian nationality is *“no denationalization, simply fewer children are born. The birth rate was very low and the economic situation was very bad during this period.”*<sup>50</sup> Sociologist M. Bahna also considered the aging of the population and the traditionally low birth rate of the Hungarian population to be the main cause of this decline. *“The vast majority of citizens of Hungarian nationality are in post-productive age. They have the highest average age.”* He pointed out to the fact that the population in Hungary has been declining for a long time as well. Other factors, such as natural assimilation, mixed marriages and inclination to the majority nationality, may also contribute to the decline of the Hungarian population.<sup>51</sup> At a scientific conference organized by the Forum Institute for Minority Research in Šamorín, the speakers (A. Simon and J. Fiala-Butora) touched on many issues in the life of Slovak Hungarians, which were not only related to the exercise of nationality rights but also had an impact on the demographic structure of the population.<sup>52</sup> In an interview for the daily Sme, the sociologist Zs. Mészáros-Lampl pointed out that while in one of the surveys in 2001, 60 % of respondents chose the affiliation to the Hungarian nation as one of the most important values, right after their family, in 2011 it was only 41 % of respondents and this item ended up at sixth place among Hungarians (behind family, work, good interpersonal relationships, personal freedom and social recognition.) National identity was one

48 *Denník N*, 31. 3. 2016, Petőcz, K. Maďarská otázka opäť na programe.

49 *Pravda*, 19. 6. 2012, Maďarov je menej. U nás aj v Maďarsku.

50 *Sme*, 1. 3. 2012, Ubudlo veriacich, aj občanov maďarskej národnosti.

51 *Pravda*, 19. 6. 2012, Maďarov je menej. U nás aj v Maďarsku; *Pravda*, 7. 7. 2012, Markuš, Š. Populačná dilema Maďarov.

52 *Denník N*, 10. 10. 2018. Morvay, P. Maďarská menšina má sté narodeniny.

of the important values of the Hungarians, but not the most important. That was the reason why Zs. Mészáros-Lampl considered assimilation to be one of the important factors in the decline of the population of Hungarian nationality in Slovakia.<sup>53</sup> *The influence of demographic factors on ethnic identity was confirmed by the comparison of the results from our research in 2004 and 2018.*<sup>54</sup>

In 2014, J. Berényi published information about the proposals of the SMK, which would address the decline of Hungarians in Slovakia, in the Hungarian media. He demanded that the Slovak government address the economic situation in the areas with the Hungarian minority and that it adopt a comprehensive law on minorities, their financing and the country's administrative organisation. At the same time, he published the SMK's proposals for the self-governing organisation of areas with Hungarian minority. He proposed the creation of territorial autonomy in the areas where Hungarians make up 50 % of the population. In the interest of good Slovak-Hungarian relations, the Hungarian government did not respond to the proposal. It was supported at the conference in Šamorín by the chairman of the Hungarian Parliamentary Committee on National Unity, K. Pánczél. Due to the fact that the proposals were presented only in the Hungarian language, the official places did not respond to the proposal and only K. Petőcz pointed out that if Berényi wanted to discuss the proposal, he should have translated it into Slovak as well.<sup>55</sup> The SMK presented itself as the only party that can stop the demographic decline of Hungarians in Slovakia in their election program in 2016.<sup>56</sup>

The decrease of the population of Hungarian nationality was also discussed at the meeting of Foreign Ministers M. Lajčák and J. Martonyi in June 2012. Slovak Minister admitted that according to the census results, the proportion of Hungarian citizens to the total population decreased by 1.2 %, compared to the situation ten years ago, but he reminded that the proportion of citizens of Slovak nationality decreased by as much as 5.1 %, according to the census. *“We must not flatten those results, because we would come to the conclusion that the most assimilated nationality in Slovakia are the Slovaks.”*<sup>57</sup> In February 2015, the problem of the Hungarian minority in relation to the demographic development did not appear in the *National Strategy* approved by the government. The follow-up *Action Plan* contained only a section on raising awareness.

53 *Sme*, 12. 6. 2016, Maďarov ubúda. Čo ich najviac trápi? (rozhovor M. Vrabcovej s Z. Mészáros-Lampl).

54 MARTONYIK, J. Demographic Variables as Predictors of Ethnic Identity. In ĎURKOVSKÁ, M.–ŠUTAJ, Š. – REGINÁČOVÁ, M. (eds.). *Ethnic Relations in Slovakia at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Košice: Šafárikpress, 2020, p. 67-79; REGINÁČOVÁ, N. Linguistic Orientation and Communication with the “Closest Ones” Based on Selected Demographic Factors – Age (Historical-Sociological Comparative Analysis). In ĎURKOVSKÁ, M.–ŠUTAJ, Š. – REGINÁČOVÁ, M. (eds.). *Ethnic Relations in Slovakia at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Košice: Šafárikpress, 2020, p. 80-96.

55 *Pravda*, 9. 12. 2015, Markuš, Š. Hlasy zo záhrobia.

56 *Denník N*, 19. 2. 2016, Morvay P. SMK ide o život.

57 *Pravda*, 2. 6. 2012, Zdanie klame, zhodli sa Lajčák s Martonyim.

The Office of the Plenipotentiary for National Minorities prepared a draft communication strategy aimed at members of national minorities in connection with the preparation of the 2021 Population and Housing Census.<sup>58</sup> The issue was addressed by the National Action Plan for the Population and Housing Census 2021 for the years 2017 – 2020, which was discussed in the Government of the Slovak Republic on March 1, 2017. In cooperation with the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, a strategic goal entitled *Paying increased attention to special groups of the population whose census requires a specific approach*, was developed within the framework of PHC 2021. Population groups in terms of nationality or ethnicity, taking into account their mother tongue, are considered to be among those whose census requires such a specific approach, also for the purposes of national legislation (as well as homeless people, marginalized groups, people with severe disabilities, the elderly...). In particular, the Plenipotentiary L. Bukovszky and Committee on National Minorities and Ethnic Groups (VNMES) have long advocated the proposal that it be possible to declare several ethnicities during the census.<sup>59</sup>

The declining population of some national minorities is related to changes in European society, but also to natural assimilation processes that are part of the ethnic unification of “nation” states in the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and are characteristic of all Central European states. Slovakia has long maintained a tendency to preserve ethnic diversity, in contrast to neighbouring countries (Hungary, Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic), in which assimilation processes preceded the situation in Slovakia by decades. The decrease in the proportion and number of people of Hungarian nationality in Slovakia is caused by several factors: greater natural decline (birth rate, mortality), mixed marriages and migration processes (migration to Hungary, the Czech Republic and Western Europe). Affected by the changes in the economy and the nature of industrial and agricultural production, the population moved to cities (Bratislava, Košice, but also cities in southern Slovakia), which is related to the decline of the rural population. Natural assimilation in favour of the majority ethnic group was also significant. Everything that contributed to the changes in the ethnic structure in other Central European countries affected the Hungarian population in Slovakia as well.

58 Action Plan for the Protection of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and Ethnic Groups for 2016 – 2020; [http://www.narodnostnemensiny.gov.sk/data/files/6765\\_akny-plan-ochrany-pravosob-patriacich-k-narodnostnym-mensinam-a-etnickym-skupinam-na-roky-2016-%E2%80%932020.pdf](http://www.narodnostnemensiny.gov.sk/data/files/6765_akny-plan-ochrany-pravosob-patriacich-k-narodnostnym-mensinam-a-etnickym-skupinam-na-roky-2016-%E2%80%932020.pdf)

59 Fifth Report on the Implementation of the Framework Convention in the Slovak Republic...; Minutes from XXXII. VNMES meeting, 8 February 2019.



# Nationality Policy of Slovak Governments in the Years 2004 – 2018

By nationality policy we mean the activity of the governing sections of a state, regulating the relations between the majority nation and national minorities, as well as between national minorities themselves, in its territory. Nationality policy affects almost all areas of the social life of the state. State authorities execute the nationality policy. “*The absence of any nationality policy is actually also a nationality policy.*”<sup>60</sup> In Slovak conditions, the term nationality policy is also synonymous with the term minority policy. In Slovak historical science and political science, we encounter it in various contexts, e.g. as with the policy of the governments of the Kingdom of Hungary towards the Slovaks. This is how the policy towards Slovaks in inter-war Czechoslovakia or towards national minorities was described throughout the entire period of historical development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In a narrower sense, we can understand nationality policy in Slovakia as an elaborate, conceptual program of the state’s relationship with national minorities, expressed in basic or specific documents of state bodies. As a systemic conception of the state based on historical, ideological, philosophical and legal principles, based on a set of sociologically and economically (demographically) justified measures presented by the state in relation to the population, which is in a minority position. The baselines, principles and rules of nationality policy should be prepared in the form of a binding conceptual document of the state, which determines the manner of implementation of nationality policy on the basis of constitutional standards, laws and in accordance with international documents on the issue of rights and status of national minorities. As no expected nationality program exists in the case of Slovakia, we can perceive and examine the nationality policy as a set of measures and steps of political representation of the state towards national minorities, which is implemented on the basis of: 1 the legal status of national minorities (constitutional and legal provision of the rights of national minorities); 2 policy documents and decisions (government program statements, human rights strategy, action programs for the implementation of policies and strategies on human rights and minorities ...); 3 programs of political parties, their goals, practical policy and the opinions of political elites, which influence public discourse and opinions through the media, policies and statements of political elites; 4 obligations resulting from international documents, agreements and conventions adopted and accepted by the Slovak Republic within European and international structures (EU, OSCE, Council of Europe, UN, NATO ...), or bilateral agreements and treaties; 5 policy towards neighbouring countries, in this case in relation to

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60 Characteristics of nationality policy e.g. in BENŽA, M. Dve koncepcie národnostnej otázky. In ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.). *Národ a národnosti na Slovensku v transformujúcej sa spoločnosti – vzťahy a konflikty*. Prešov: Universum, 2005, p. 100-110.

Hungary and its national policy implemented for Hungarians living in Slovakia; 6 the position of minorities in Slovakia, especially with regard to the demographic structure and demographic changes, cultural policy, nationality education and the use of the language of national minorities; 7 institutional provision of the issue of national minorities (Government Council, VNMES, application of self-governing principles in minority policy...); 8 economic development of the areas where national minorities live; 9 the historical context of the development and position of national minorities. It is clear already from this list that it was necessary to single out a narrower range of problems we will focus on in this monograph.

Slovakia lacks a program, a systematic definition of nationality policy. However, we can observe how Slovak politicians tried to form a minority policy in the period under review. Part of the political representatives in Slovakia was aware of the deficit of such a policy and tried to replace it with the theses stated, for example, in the program documents of governments, political parties or by developing strategies and plans in human rights policies, anti-discrimination programs, the fight against racism and xenophobia.

In relation to Hungarian state policy, which is implemented on Hungarians living outside the mother state, we will use the term “national policy” (národná politika), as it is used by the Hungarian state policy and also taken over by Hungarian historiography and political science. When writing about Hungary’s policy towards ethnic (national) minorities in Hungary, we will use the term nationality policy (národnostná politika).

Hungarians in Slovakia, despite living most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century separated from their mother state, live in relatively compact areas in southern Slovakia. They have been able to create an institutional network, political parties, develop their culture, literature, theatres, associations, science, libraries and language, in close contact with their mother nation. In this minority, mechanisms have developed, both at the level of higher and regional politics, creating the conditions for the development of self-government in many areas of life. This is a reflection of the strong ethnic identity, feelings of ethnic belonging and compactness of this minority.<sup>61</sup> The proximity of the mother nation and the state where this nation lives in its nation-state, and the historical context that influenced the coexistence of this minority and Slovaks in southern Slovakia, contribute to the fact that the Hungarian minority approaches many current issues of social and political development from a different perspective and perceives them differently than the majority ethnic group.

From 1918 to the present, the Hungarian minority has gone through a complex path of development. At the end of this journey, however, they remained a strong, cohesive group with close internal ties, with links to the mother nation and the state in Hungary. Their basic characteristics included strong ethnic awareness, a preference for the Hungarian language in communication and an orientation towards Hungarian

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61 In more detail: FAZEKAS, J. – HUNČÍK, P. (eds.). *Maďari na Slovensku (1989 – 2004)...*; BÁRDI, N – FEDINEC, Cs. – SZARKA, L. (eds.). *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Atlantic Research and Publication, 2011, 795 p.

culture.<sup>62</sup> With regard to confession, it is specific in the aspect that most Hungarians belong to the Roman Catholic Church, but most members of the Reformed Christian Church are of Hungarian nationality. It was created by separation from the mother nation after the First World War as a result of serious geopolitical changes (the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy), which affected the history of Central Europe. Although it did not evolve in a fully favourable environment, the pressure against the minority was not strong enough to devastate it. Despite the post-war repression, the communist period, which gave it the status of a persecuted, oppressed minority. It is typical for the whole period that the Hungarian minority sought some form of institutional provision that would represent the Hungarian minority externally and would be accepted within the community.

The document *Basic Conditions for the Survival and Development of Hungarians in Slovakia*, signed by Most-Híd with SMK and OSMS in September 2012, defines: “Hungarians in Slovakia are part of the Hungarian nation and at the same time citizens of the Slovak Republic. According to the document, it would be advantageous for Slovakia to perceive the otherness of the local Hungarians as a value and an opportunity to be used and not an obstacle to be overcome.”<sup>63</sup>

The Hungarian minority in Slovakia and its representations play an important role in social and political events in Slovakia. After 1989, the relationship of the government policy with this minority has also been a barometer of how European and often also how democratic the government groups are. This results from the position of the issue of the status of national minorities in European society and in the policy of the EU.

### **Minority Policy of Slovak Governments and some Obstacles to its Formation**

Central European states were founded after the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy as nation-states. They draw on this tradition and mostly declare themselves as such in their constitutions. Slovakia is a laboratory of ethnicity. Both Slovak and Hungarian ethnicities endured trials of history, many families find in their numerous influences in their family tree not only Slovak and Hungarian, but also German, Ruthenian and Jewish, which ultimately affects not only what ethnicity they themselves declare (or do not declare), but also affects their attitude towards ethnicity and the nation-state.

In this situation, it is up to the state representatives to find a way to resolve the relationship between Slovaks and national minorities that would remove their feeling (sometimes also declared by the insensitive speeches of leading politicians) that they

62 More detail on the status of Hungarian minority in post-communist period e.g. In ZELIOVÁ, A. a kol. *Minoritné etnické spoločenstvá na Slovensku v procesoch spoločenských premien*. Bratislava: Veda, 1994; PEKÁR, M. et al. *Ethnic Minorities in Slovakia in the Years 1918 – 1945*. Prešov: Universum, 2011.

63 *Aktuálne*, 24. 9. 2012, (SITA) SMK a Most podpísali dokument..., <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/smk-a-most-podpisali-dokument-o-rozvoji-madarov-o-zblizovani-vraj-hovorit-nemozno/slovensko/politika/>

are tenants in this state and do not have the same rights as the majority nation. To generate a sense of belonging, a sense that this state – the Slovak Republic, is also their state, and not a sense of exclusion.

A fundamental problem of the government's nationality policy in Slovakia is the conflict between the civic and ethnic principle in Slovak politics. Slovak government policy has been between the rock and the hard place of the civic and linguistic-cultural principle during the building of the state. Slovak politicians constantly prefer the national principle as the basic principle on which the Slovak Republic is built, although with regard to the composition of the population, the civic principle is a natural principle for Slovak politics. It responds to the policy of Hungary with a national populist policy,<sup>64</sup> which is inappropriate and unsatisfactory for Slovak conditions. The ethnic characteristics of the surrounding states are different, they have implemented assimilation policies of the nation-states already in previous periods, at a time when the Slovak nation was only creating conditions for their own state. In today's Europe, however, such a policy is unacceptable and creates the conditions for disputes and problems.

The political content of Slovak minority policy in relation to the Hungarian minority (and not only to them) was mostly securitized. This policy was perceived as a security policy and not a human rights policy.<sup>65</sup> Even before the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic in 1993, when the principles of the future constitutional organization of the Czechoslovak state were being developed in the form of independent "national" republics, concerns about the future Slovak-Hungarian interstate relations arose. Already at that time, Prime Minister V. Mečiar described them not as a problem of neighbourly relations, but rather as a security problem.<sup>66</sup> At that time, there were also concerns about the reaction of the Hungarian population in Slovakia, whose political representations rejected the division of the state. The situation was also complicated by unresolved issues of the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros waterworks, for instance.

The closely related issues of ensuring the security of the state and preserving the dominance of its Slovakness were reflected not only in the political statements of most of the leaders of Slovak political parties but also in their real policies. Scientific circles, but also by some Hungarian intellectuals pointed out to this aspect and the typical feature of Slovak minority policy. However, the change in the political climate and political setting was not appealing to Slovak political representations. Possible leaders of such a perception of minority issues (such as R. Chmel, K. Petőcz), even at the times when they held major executive positions, were relentlessly put in line by Slovak political reality. And not only that. Nationalist visions of Hungarian state

64 More on the issue of national populism in MESEŽNIKOV, G. – GYARFÁŠOVÁ, O. *Národný populizmus na Slovensku*. Bratislava: IVO, 2008.

65 LAJČÁKOVÁ, J. Menšinová politika na Slovensku v roku 2011. In *Menšinová politika na Slovensku*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2011, In <http://cvek.sk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/42011-sk.pdf>

66 IRMANOVÁ, E. *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku a její místo v zahraniční politice Slovenska a Maďarska po roce 1989*. Ústí nad Labem: Albis international, 2005, p. 150.

policy, which perceived and presented the Hungarian minority in Slovakia as part of their internal policy, found support, for political and economic reasons, among the Hungarian political representations in Slovakia as well. K. Petőcz pointed out the contradictions between the Hungarian national and Slovak minority policy in connection with the competencies of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities. In particular, he criticized the fact that the Office and the position of the Plenipotentiary were without real decision-making powers and were also taken out of the context of human rights policies. He also criticized the absence of a human rights dimension of national policy on the other side of the border.<sup>67</sup> *“The Hungarian issue in Slovakia is still almost exclusively a political issue rather than a human rights challenge. As a result, it is impossible to address any issue concerning national minorities with “ordinary” human rights instruments.* <sup>68</sup>

### **Programme Statements of the Slovak Governments in the Years 2004 – 2018 and Nationality Policy**

Although the issue of nationality has not been among the most significant and closely monitored problems of the inhabitants of Slovakia in public opinion polls since 1989, its importance to society is indisputable. Since May 2004, when the Slovak Republic was accepted into the EU along with other countries, Slovak society has undergone other significant changes. Due to the limited space, it is not possible to list all the facts and events that took place between 2004 and 2018. This will be the subject of a further special analysis of the Slovak nationality policy, which we want to publish.

In relation to these contexts, it is worth noting that during the years 2004 – 2019, there were four presidents in the office (Rudolf Schuster 1999 – 2004, Ivan Gašparovič 2004 – 2014, Andrej Kiska 2014 – 2019, Zuzana Čaputová – 2019), both presidential elections and elections to the European Parliament (2004, 2009, 2014, 2019), to the National Council of the Slovak Republic (2006, 2010, 2012, 2016), were held, as well as the elections to the bodies of self-governing regions (2005, 2009, 2013, 2017) and municipal elections (2006, 2010, 2014, 2018). There were six governments, led by four prime ministers (Mikuláš Dzurinda 2002 – 2006; Iveta Radičová 2010 – 2012; Róbert Fico 2006 – 2010, 2012 – 2016, 2016 – until March 2018, when he was replaced by Peter Pellegrini). In a way, each of these institutions, personalities and events contributed to the formation of the view of the population of Slovakia on nationality relations, nationality policy and the position of their own and other ethnic groups in the existing and developing social system in Slovakia.

In Czechoslovakia, the Velvet Revolution of 1989 temporarily united the political forces in Slovakia that were in opposition to the communist regime. Unlike the previous regime, the open promotion of the intentions of various groups of the population, associating e.g. according to ethnicity, brought about fundamental changes in democratic conditions: the possibility to openly speak the views that had no space

<sup>67</sup> *Sme*, 30. 6. 2012, Petőcz, K. Hranice suverenity a národná politika.

<sup>68</sup> *Denník N*, 31. 3. 2016, Petőcz, K. Maďarská otázka opäť na programe.

in a society conforming to communist ideology, even with the risk that they would be addressed on nationalist principles. The issue of the Hungarian minority became one of the most important topics of public life in Slovakia, which in various periods after November 1989 became more prominent and the subject of political discussions which polarized the minority itself and the majority Slovak ethnic group.

During the historically very short period 1989 – 1993, Slovakia experienced two major changes: a change in the political regime and a change in nationality. The new situation, after the fall of communist regimes in Europe, was followed by the search for and completion of the identities of nations and national minorities, which often took a distinct and even confrontational form in some groups of the population.

An important political milestone in the changes in the nationality policy of the Slovak Republic was the replacement of government with the dominant position of V. Mečiar by coalition governments of M. Dzurinda in 1998. The position of Deputy Prime Minister was held by SMK representative P. Csáky, the Minister of the Environment was L. Miklós, the Minister of Construction and Regional Development was I. Harn, all of whom were members of the Hungarian minority. After the appointment of the government in September 1998, in addition to several institutional and organizational measures (establishment of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Committee for Human Rights and Minorities, the creation of the position of the Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights, Minorities and Regional Development, creation of the Human Rights and Minorities Section at the Government Office, reconstruction of the Government Council for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups with majority voting potential for minorities, the creation of a section on minority cultures at the Ministry of Culture and a Department of Nationality Education at the Ministry of Education) major legislative measures were also adopted – in particular the law on the use of the languages of national minorities.<sup>69</sup>

In this case, it was not only the way in which Slovak nationality policy was perceived by the rest of Europe but also the way in which the state's nationality policy was implemented towards minority ethnic communities. In relation to the issue of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, official state policy and Slovak political parties mostly only responded to the activities of the Republic of Hungary, which considered the issue of Hungarians abroad (including the position of Hungarians in Slovakia) a part of the solution of domestic political conflicts between government coalitions.

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69 Act No. 184/1999 Coll. on the Use of Languages of National Minorities was approved on 10 July 1999 and entered into force on 1 September 1999. According to the law, Slovak citizens belonging to a national minority could use the minority language in official communication in the municipality if they made up at least 20 % of the population. The implementing regulation to the Act on the Use of Languages of National Minorities was the Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 221/1999, which determined the list of municipalities where it was possible to use the language of a national minority. The list of municipalities was later amended on the basis of the 2001 census and concerned 655 municipalities, of which 502 were municipalities inhabited by residents of Hungarian nationality.

In this way, discussions on the decrees of President E. Beneš,<sup>70</sup> on the issue of citizenship, started in Slovakia. Slovakia has made significant progress in self-government, which, by gradually accepting self-government principles for the management of towns and municipalities, changes in the territorial division and separation of state administration from self-government, has also opened the door for the application of self-government principles in regions inhabited by national minorities.

Even after the end of the controversial period represented by V. Mečiar's dominance in politics, the problematic issues of the position of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia did not become the subject of open public discussions for fear of a fragile political coalition. Hungarian political representation in Slovakia also aimed to prevent the accession of political parties with nationalist rhetoric and a program that would ignore most of the requirements of Hungarian policy in Slovakia, or for fear that the SMK would not be able to complete the reforms at the positions held by its representatives in the Slovak government. In Slovakia, there was a lack of political will to agree on concepts and legislative standards concerning the rights of ethnic minorities and to accept positions of the political parties of the majority and the minority. With the exception of Hungarian political parties and later the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK), Slovak political parties (and neither the Slovak Republic) did not have an elaborated program on minority issues in the period under review (2004 – 2018).<sup>71</sup> After the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic, the influences of international institutions, especially the Council of Europe, started to manifest to a significant extent in Slovakia, as Slovakia tried to achieve full membership in these institutions.<sup>72</sup> The Slovak Republic was admitted to the Council of Europe on 30 June 1993.

Since 2004, the Slovak Republic has been a member of the European Union. Although a very short time has passed since this historical event, with regard to our issues it is necessary to mention that this body has significantly influenced Slovakia's direction in national relations and nationality policy, although the changes that have been most vital for the citizens of Slovakia were mostly related to practical policy, EU subsidy programs, freedom of travel, labour market, etc.

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70 In addition to the decrees issued by E. Beneš, politics, journalism and public opinion included in the term "Beneš's Decrees" all post-war measures against minorities, even if they were carried out not on the basis of presidential decrees but on other standards (such as the displacement of Germans based on Potsdam Conference, the displacement of Hungarians as part of a population exchange between the Czechoslovak Republic and Hungary, on the basis of an intergovernmental agreement, displacement of civil servants who came to southern Slovakia after the Vienna Arbitration, on the basis of a Ceasefire Agreement with Hungary of 20 January 1945). Many decrees of E. Beneš did not apply in Slovakia. (ŠUTAJ, Š. – MOSNÝ, P. – OLEJNÍK, M. *Prezidentské dekréty Edvarda Beneša v povojnovom Slovensku*. Bratislava: Veda, 2002.)

71 MESEŽNIKOV, G. (ed.). *Volby 2002. Analýza volebných programov politických strán a hnutí*. Bratislava: IVO, 2002.

72 More in this issue: FERENČUHOVÁ, B. Problematika maďarskej menšiny na Slovensku v európskych inštitúciách po roku 1989. In ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.). *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku po roku 1989*. Prešov: Universum, p. 134-146.

The government of M. Dzurinda (2002 – 2006), in which the position of Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for Human and Minority Rights and Regional Development was held by P. Csáky, the Minister of Agriculture was Zs. Simon, the Minister of Construction and Regional Development was L. Gyurovský and the Minister of the Environment was L. Miklós, started with the aim to ensure full membership in the EU and NATO for Slovakia. Deficits caused by the “disturbances” of Slovak democracy during the period of V. Mečiar’s political dominance presented a serious problem for Slovakia and made it difficult to solve not only international but also internal problems. These undoubtedly included the relationship with national minorities, especially the Hungarians. From 1998 to 2006, the representatives of the Hungarian political party SMK were part of the governing coalition for eight years. However, this did not mean that they could enforce all their requirements on their coalition partners. The priority was to maintain the coalition and prevent V. Mečiar from returning to the forefront of Slovak politics. The Government’s Programme Statement of November 2002 did not include a special section devoted to national minorities. The position of P. Csáky as the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for human and minority rights seemed to be a sufficient guarantee that the minority issues would be in a different position after the anti-Hungarian campaign of Mečiar. The government was committed to “*guaranteeing civil liberties and the comprehensive development of human rights.*” The change in the administrative organization, which was disadvantageous for the Hungarian minority, was not realistic even in this election period and was thus at least compensated by the promise to change electoral laws, increase the number of constituencies and increase the weight of preferential votes. At the same time, the elements of self-government, their financial provision and decentralization, as well as the “*deconcentration of state administration*” were to be promoted, thus strengthening not only the position but also the responsibility of territorial self-government with clear rules for fulfilling tasks delegated to self-government.

With regard to education, the government undertook to create conditions for teaching in the mother tongue, not only for the Hungarian but also for the Ruthenian and Roma minorities and at the same time to increase the quality of the official language teaching and establish a university with the Hungarian language of instruction. The Government was to reinstate the bodies of minority and Church education at the Ministry of Education of the SR, which were abolished during the reign of Mečiar.<sup>73</sup>

73 Minority education for pupils of Hungarian nationality in Slovakia went through a difficult period, from the post-war liquidation of Hungarian education to the attempts to revitalize it during the socialist period. (GABZDILOVÁ, S. Možnosti a problémy vzdelávania v jazyku maďarskom na Slovensku po druhej svetovej vojne do roku 1953. In *Historický časopis*, 45, 4, 1997, 612-630; GABZDILOVÁ, S. Problémy výuky jazyka slovenského na školách s vyučovacím jazykom maďarským po roku 1948. In HARAĽSIM, Ľ. (ed.). *Národnosti na Slovensku*, Bratislava: Veda, 1993, p. 100-107.) In the period under review, Slovak legislation enabled institutional education in the Hungarian language at all types and kinds of schools and school facilities, from pre-primary education to universities. The education sector applies and respects the democratic right of parents to choose the language of instruction of the school in the education of children belonging to national minorities. Since the early 1990s, minority education has become a sour-



As for culture, the government committed to creating all-round conditions “for the preservation and promotion of culture ... including the culture of national minorities, ethnic and opinion groups.” The new laws on radio and television broadcasting included the creation of a separate program for Hungarian broadcasting in STV and SRo and the extension of broadcast time.

When implementing the foreign policy, the Government of the Slovak Republic was to pay attention to the implementation of international standards in human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and the finalization of legal standards in this field (anti-discrimination law). The Government announced the preparation of a law on minorities and the financing of minority cultures, which it failed to fulfil.<sup>74</sup> In the Government’s Programme Statement, the Government committed to a modern form of Slovak statehood and described the “national and cultural diversity as enriching elements in modern civil society” and promised to “... oppose all manifestations of ethnic and racial intolerance.”<sup>75</sup>

On 11 December 2003, the Government of the SR approved the Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Hungary on Mutual Support of National Minorities in Education and Culture, which responded to the Act on Foreign Hungarians.

Following the 2006 elections, the government of R. Fico assumed office. The governing coalition Smer-SD – SNS – HZDS took over all obligations arising from international documents. In relation to persons belonging to national minorities, the government committed to proceed in the spirit of the *European Charter* and the *Framework Convention*. The government declared their interest in drafting a law on the financing of minority culture and creating conditions for the establishment of the Office for Minorities in the Slovak Republic, improving the conditions of minori-

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ce of national tensions. The Hungarian minority reacted sensitively to the assimilation efforts of the authorities in Hungarian schools, especially during the governments of V. Mečiar (alternative education, school documentation, geographical names in the Hungarian language ...). At that time, Hungarian political elites sought to remove the distortions of the communist regime, which had caused great damage to minority education, especially in connection with the abolition of small schools in the countryside. Furthermore, schools struggled with a shortage of teachers. In the monitored years, the representatives of the Hungarian minority demanded, in particular, the completion of the Hungarian school system from nurseries to universities, with a certain degree of application of the principles of autonomous management. State authorities, in turn, placed emphasis on ensuring the right of persons belonging to minorities to learn the official language. (LÁSZLÓ, B. Maďarské národnostné školstvo. In FAZEKAS, J. – HUNČÍK, P. (eds.). *Maďari na Slovensku (1989 – 2004)*..., p. 199-258; VAJDA, B. Történelemdidaktika és történelemtankönyv-kutatás. Didaktika dejepisu a výskum učebnic dejepisu. History Didactics and Research of History Schoolbooks. Komárom: Selye János Egyetem, 2020.)

74 One of the serious problems of minority policy was the way in which the culture of national minorities was financed. In 2001, the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic established a system of providing financial resources in a program called *Culture of National Minorities*. The funds were distributed by means of expert commissions. In 1995, the Hungarian minority received € 363,540 to support cultural activities. The state contributed a total of € 1,846,534 to the cultural activities of minorities. This amount gradually increased to € 8 million in 2018.

75 Programme Statement of the Government of M. Dzurinda 2002.

ty education, especially teaching in the mother tongue of all national minorities. In a statement published in August 2006, the Government declared a program which, in addition to preserving the rights of national minorities, emphasized mainly Slovak national elements, which in relation to national minorities manifested itself primarily in promoting the teaching of the Slovak language and promoting Slovak patriotism.<sup>76</sup> Ensuring knowledge of the official – Slovak language – for students of other ethnicity is undoubtedly an important element for their successful life in Slovakia. However, the manner of the implementation of this was problematic. “*The Government of the Slovak Republic will pay attention to the development and protection of Slovak as the official language in cooperation with relevant state and scientific institutions, as well as professional institutions such as Matica slovenská*”.... “*The Government of the Slovak Republic will provide support for the culture of national minorities and ethnic groups and disadvantaged population groups by means of a grant system. At the same time, they will also support the development of Slovak culture in linguistically mixed areas.*”<sup>77</sup>

The promotion of the national character of the state, disrupted relations between the coalition and the opposition, deteriorating relations with neighbouring Hungary and a deteriorating social atmosphere in relation to minorities and especially the Hungarian one, also marked minority policy in Slovakia. The governing coalition set out three basic objectives for their policy: *human dignity*, considered a fundamental pillar of the concept of human rights, and one of the universal values on which the EU is founded; *the welfare state* and *the economy*, based “*on the principles of a socially and ecologically oriented market economy*”.<sup>78</sup> The first pillar in particular, if positively accepted, would provide a fundamental framework for building an open and modern European minority policy. Like the previous government programs, this one also did not include a special section devoted to national minorities. It only paid attention to them in the general definitions, which were the response to international commitments.<sup>79</sup> Within the Smer-SD – SNS – HZDS coalition, with a general emphasis on the national element, there were no consistent ideas on how to implement the set objectives. The coalition presented opinions on the threat to national minorities in relation to the composition of the governing coalition. The highest representatives of the Slovak Republic often emphasized that the nature of the regime and its relationship to minority rights did not change. According to the Slovak Prime Minister, the Slovak Republic is a country that provides a high standard of protection of the rights of national minorities. “*It is so high that we can be a role model for other countries in the EU and should not be criticized for these issues.*”<sup>80</sup> Slovak governments with strong national or nationalist accents used to evaluate their nationality policy highly positively. This is what V. Mečiar did at the end of the election period in his speech

76 Programme Statement of the Government of R. Fico of August 2006.

77 Programme Statement of the Government of R. Fico of August 2006.

78 Programme Statement of the Government of R. Fico of August 2006.

79 Programme Statement of the Government of R. Fico of August 2006.

80 *Hospodárske noviny*, 23. 10. 2007.

in the National Council of the Slovak Republic,<sup>81</sup> as well as some subsequent governments. Changes in the Slovak-Hungarian relations in the Slovak press in general were linked to two events: that the SMK ceased to be part of the governing coalition and the fact that P. Csáky became the chairman of the SMK. Deputy Prime Minister D. Čaplovič declared the “status quo” principle in relation to minorities. According to him, this government did not change the position of national minorities, he called the steps of the SMK the destabilizing factor, as they did not address the problems of the minorities at the time when they were in the Government, but only started then. On the other hand, his opponents, for example, J. Berényi, emphasized that the government was making gradual changes to the disadvantage of the Hungarian minority and that while they were in the Government, they were dealing with other matters, such as the establishment of a Hungarian University or the law on the use of minority languages.<sup>82</sup> The Hungarian minority and its representations closed started isolating themselves, sensitively perceiving that the Slovak political elites excluded them from decision-making. They were all the more determined to seek their way and protection with the elites from their homeland.

After the joining of the Schengen area, in which the borders were already permeable, there was an expectation of a new perspective and alternative for political representations in Slovakia and Hungary to erase post-Trianon traumas and open a new open chapter in the history of Slovak-Hungarian relations. This would require abandoning school and folklore perceptions of relations and elevating minority policy to a common product of European thinking. After brief euphoria, this alternative European Schengen solution was forgotten and replaced by the concept of cross-border unification of a united Hungarian nation in Hungary and the conceptless notion of the anti-Hungarian national populist status quo presented by R. Fico’s first two governments.

The first government of R. Fico did not involve the representatives of Hungarian political parties. From 4 July 2006 to 8 July 2010, archaeologist and historian D. Čaplovič held the position of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for the Knowledge Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities. The Minister of Education J. Mikolaj and the Minister of Culture M. Maďarič significantly intervened in the discourse on the status of national minorities. After the criticism of the Hungarian Prime Minister that Slovak Hungarians are not represented in the government (F. Gyurcsány mentioned that the people decided on the distribution of votes in the elections, not on the governing coalition), Prime Minister R. Fico emphasized that Slovakia has the right to form a governing coalition regardless of the opinions of the Hungarian party, i.e. that the Hungarian party has no right to interfere in the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic by determining the character of the Slovak government. At the time, it was after all bizarre to think of a coalition of a Hungarian political party with partners from the Government. According to R. Fico, the

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81 The speech of the Prime Minister of the SR V. Mečiar at 49<sup>th</sup> meeting of the GC SR 10. 7. 1998. <https://www.nrsr.sk/dl/Browser/Document?documentId=65930>

82 *Hospodárske noviny*, 7. 10. 2007.

people decided on this government in the elections. Accepting both views, we can say that it was really a sovereign matter for the Slovak party to form a governing coalition, but at the same time it also had to be responsible if the government is considered unreliable with such a coalition partner.<sup>83</sup> This was no longer just the opinion of the Hungarian Prime Minister, but also of the representatives of the EU and the European Socialists. R. Fico chose J. Slota as a coalition partner and tried to gain part of his electorate with “national” anti-Hungarian policy. Following the 2006 elections, which took place in both Hungary and Slovakia, at a meeting of the Slovak-Hungarian Joint Commission on Minorities, both parties informed about those parts of the programme statements that were related to the commission’s activities. In the minutes of the meeting, *“with satisfaction, the parties noted that the issues concerning the care for national minorities are included in the programme statements of both governments, in accordance with European values and standards for the protection of national minorities. The parties agree to keep each other informed on the implementation of these documents. The Hungarian party informed on the basic principles and the institutional system of the renewed national policy.”*<sup>84</sup>

The position in which the new government came to power, and the partners who helped Smer-SD gain power as a decisive party in the governing coalition, might make it seem that the status quo policy in the minority policy, which had already been announced at the time by the representatives of Smer, is a positive phenomenon. However, it turned out that it was not a way out, on the contrary, it was a dead end for the government policy. No status quo can be a long-term and functional policy in a dynamic world. For the entire period 2006 – 2010, the ruling party did not try (except for the strategy for the Roma minority, which is not the subject of our analysis), similarly to previous governments, including the ones with SMK representation, to prepare conceptual material, strategy or program for minority issues or and try to gain the support of its coalition partners, the opposition, the representation of minorities and the society as a whole, or at least initiate a debate on the problems of the Hungarian minority across the society. The government policy perceived the Hungarian minority as a security threat and a different view was out of the question for the ruling coalition. Thus it also failed in preventing ethnic disputes or conflicts in advance, as well as seeking positive solutions in minority policy for the benefit of the state and the position of the members of national minorities.

The characteristic features of the government’s minority policy in relation to national minorities may include: acceptance of international documents and Slovak legislation adopted in previous periods (Act on the Name and Surname, Act on the Names of Municipalities, Act on the Languages of National Minorities...); differences in relation to the Hungarian minority and other minorities; given not only by the government policy but also by the differences in the characteristics of individual minorities. The real phenomena of government and non-government policy between 2006

83 In the discussion program O 5 minút 12 in STV 1 16 November 2008.

84 Minutes from VI. Meeting of ZK, Bratislava, 22. 9. 2006. Document from the Government session 13. 12. 2006.

– 2010 included: anti-Hungarian orientation of some representatives of the governing coalition; the search for an “enemy” in the representation of the Hungarian minority; deterioration of the atmosphere between the governing coalition and the Hungarian political representation, which adversely affected the perception of Slovak – Hungarian relations at the civic level; in non-government policy it is the deterioration of relations between the opposition and the Hungarian political representation as a result of SMK’s more open nationality policy after it got rid of the commitments of the governing party and the strengthening national rhetoric of the current opposition parties oriented towards a nationally oriented voter.

Between 2006 – 2010, Slovakia was affected by aggressive manipulation of public opinion based on chauvinism and anti-Hungarian nationalism, with the leading role played by the SNS led by J. Slota; the first vice-president A. Belousovová and the Minister of Education J. Mikolaj tried to keep up. In this period, there was also the politically manipulated case of an assault on a Hungarian student in Nitra, Hedviga Malinová, which has never been sufficiently investigated,<sup>85</sup> an attempt to adopt a “patriotic law”, which emphasized the application of Slovak national symbolism in offices and schools (many of these models were inspired by Hungarian conditions), the use of geographical names in Hungarian textbooks, politicized discussions on autonomy. Many issues were addressed in campaigns. For example, the amendment to the language law,<sup>86</sup> the school law.<sup>87</sup> The efforts to promote the protection of the republic by

85 ŠUTAJ, Š. – SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. Národnostné menšiny. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2007. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*. Bratislava: IVO, 2008, p. 163-193; DOSTÁL, Ondrej. Národnostné menšiny. In BÚTORA, M. – KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. (Eds.). *Slovensko 2006. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*. Bratislava: IVO, 2007; *Štát verzus Hedviga III*, [http://tyzden.sk/sk/tema/stat\\_verzus\\_hedviga\\_iii\\_.php](http://tyzden.sk/sk/tema/stat_verzus_hedviga_iii_.php)

86 In the period after November 1989, the SNC Act on the Official Language of the Slovak Republic of October 1990 was adopted. The Act also regulated the use of a language other than the official language, i.e. the Slovak language. If members of a national minority made up more than 20 % of the population of a town or municipality, they could use their mother tongue in official communication. Act No. 270/1995 Coll. on the Official Language of the Slovak Republic was adopted after long discussions on 15 November 1995. The Act also laid down rules for the use of other languages in relation to the official language, including the languages of national minorities. The problems were caused by the amendment to the Act on the Official Language of 2009. The Act created a tense atmosphere between the majority and minorities.

87 The basic element of Slovak legislation in education was Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education (School Act), which guaranteed the right to minority education in Slovakia. However, there were also a number of other legal standards in education, which concerned minority education (on the financing of schools, on teaching staff, etc.). Education and training of members of national minorities took place in nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, special schools and school facilities with the language of instruction of a minority or the teaching of the language of a national minority and at the J. Selye University in Komárno. (SZARKA, L. Sociálne, politické a jazykové pozadie založenia Univerzity J. Selyeho v Komárne. In HALÁSZ, I. – PETRÁŠ, R. (eds.). *Menšiny, vysoké školstvo a právo*. Praha: Auditorium, 2018, p. 81-102.) The law increased the competencies of the local state administration. The founder of the school could be a municipality, a self-governing region, a district office, a state-recognized church or religious society, or another legal or natural entity or the state.

tightening the Criminal Code (cooperation with a foreign parliament, membership in the Hungarian Guards, etc. were to be persecuted). All this was supported by aggressive vocabulary, insults and ridicule of political opponents, as well as Hungarian government officials (statements about Hungarian warriors with crooked legs on small horses, insults of the “dishevelled lady”, the Hungarian Foreign Minister). The result was the absence of Slovak-Hungarian foreign and internal political dialogue at almost all levels. However, as his power and the sense of irreplaceability were increasing, Fico’s features of populism also grew into aggressive rhetoric, and in the next election period after 2016 manifested the signs of arrogant populist nationalism (perhaps we could also use the term of Jaques Rupnik – national-authoritarian populism).<sup>88</sup>

At the same time, it is necessary to take into account that in the period 2012 – 2016, while in Slovakia Smer competed for the nationalist agenda with Slota’s SNS, on the Hungarian side Fidesz competed in “nationalist” rhetoric (in terms of affecting domestic and foreign Hungarians) with Jobbik. The result was an escalation of tensions in Slovak-Hungarian international relations, which received serious cracks on both sides. The domestic Slovak-Hungarian (non-existent) “dialogue” can be assessed similarly. In the pre-election period, the issue of citizenship was discussed in hectic conditions. On 26 May 2010, the National Council of the Slovak Republic adopted an amendment to the Citizenship Act in response to the adoption of the Hungarian Act.

Although Smer-SD became the winner of the parliamentary elections in June 2010 with a result of 34.79 % of votes, the coalition agreement was signed by the SDKÚ-DS, SaS, KDĽ and Most-Híd on 6 July 2010. The government of I. Radičová included personalities who were involved in Slovak-Hungarian relations in previous periods. R. Chmel was appointed to the position of the Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and National Minorities. He was also in charge of the Government Council for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups<sup>89</sup> and the newly created Committee for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups (VNMES), which was established as one of the committees within the Government Council. K. Petőcz became the Director General of the Human Rights and Equal Treatment Section. The representation of Most-Híd in the government included the Minister of Agriculture Zs. Simon and the Minister of Environment József Nagy.

Before preparing the programme of the new government, political scientist M. Kusý wrote: “*Here, too, the parties promised anything to their voters and now*

88 *Sme*, 21. 1. 2017, Dnes je symbolom strednej Európy plot, interview of I. Daniš with J. Rupnik.

89 In Slovakia, the supreme advisory body for minority issues has long been, under various names, the “Government Council for National Minorities”, whose members were also representatives of national minorities. (ŠUTAJOVÁ, J. *Zákon o národnostiach a Rada vlády Slovenskej socialistickej republiky pre národnosti (predstavy a realita)*. Košice: ŠafárikPress, 2019, 162 p.). Governments have continued this tradition also after 1989. Since 1989, its head has been the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for national minorities. After the elections in 2006, during the time of the first government of R. Fico, there was a long period when the Government Council did not work. Following the 2011 reform, the Government Council expanded its powers in the area of human rights, the elimination of discrimination and the development of civil society. Permanent committees were created, one of them was VNMES.

they would like to be discreetly silent about it. ... There is much that needs to be removed (besides the patriotic law also the law on dual citizenship), and that needs to be added to the government programme (... e.g. the promise of the law on the rights of national minorities). Experience shows that what is not done right after the election has no chance of promotion. That's why it's important to get the most in the government programme."<sup>90</sup> However, they did not do this, could not do this and did not want to do this.

The government made up of opponents of "Fico's policy", which wanted to deepen the trust in politics and politicians, announced a "new" transparent political culture. At the same time, it was hitting the barriers of ideological fragmentation, personal animosities, and non-systemic solutions. At the time of the negotiations on the formation of the government, I. Radičová's new government announced that they do not intend to address some sensitive issues (registered partnerships, separation of the Church and the state ...) in order to form a government and prevent R. Fico from regaining power. Many promises made to voters in the pre-election period were not included in the Government's Programme Statement, or they have not been met, either due to the reluctance to come to an agreement or because the governing coalition disintegrated in spite of it all. The pre-election promises included the abolition of sanctions under language laws, an amendment to the citizenship law, and transparent financing of minority cultures. Before the election, Most-Híd declared that if they are successful, they would demand that the majority would not be able to outvote a minority in matters of minority rights, i.e. they would propose a new law on minorities. As the political scientist J. Marušiák pointed out, the SMK, which did not get into the Parliament, will use this topic to show that little had been done for the Hungarian minority.<sup>91</sup>

Most-Híd came up with proposals for several particular steps to correct the status of minorities at the negotiation of the government programme. However, the resulting programme theses contained only general statements. "*We will protect the preservation of the identity of each national minority in Slovakia, the development of their educational system and the system of cultural and social institutions,*" in culture. The law on the financing of the minority culture and the amendment to the citizenship law also remained in the Programme Statement. However, there was no change in the laws that were perceived negatively by the minorities, e.g. the State Language law, which introduced fines for the misuse of Slovak language, and the State Symbols Act, which introduced compulsory patriotism in schools. The representative of Most-Híd, Gábor Gál, said at that time: "*We also have difficult communication with KDH on some topics. These are mainly nationality issues. They have a very conservative national stance. I don't want to take it from them, however, the communication often happens outside the negotiating table. And that's not good.*"<sup>92</sup>

90 *Sme*, 14. 8. 2010, Kusý, M. Dobrú chuť, milý volič!

91 *Pravda*, 24. 6. 2010, Na nesplnené sľuby voliči nezabudnú; *Sme*, 24. 6. 2010, Menšiny vypadli.

92 *Aktuality*, 20. 6. 2011, Spokojný nebudem ani s Bugárom, ani so sebou, rozhovor s G. Gálom. <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/188841/gabor-gal-spokojny-nebudem-ani-s-bugarom-ani-sam-so-sebou/>

The philosophy of the government programme was primarily based on the respect for and observance of human rights in the country, including the rights of national minorities, which was linked to the concept of ensuring human dignity in the programme. Human rights were to become part of awareness-raising activities and curricula and to lead to the formation of a modern view of citizenship.<sup>93</sup> This is what made the government programme of the Government of I. Radičová exceptional. *“The respect for fundamental rights and freedoms is a prerequisite for building a modern democratic state and a just society. Failure to respect human rights undermines the rule of law. Therefore, the Government of the Slovak Republic shall consistently protect and support human rights. The Government of the Slovak Republic will correct the restrictive legislative and political measures from the previous period, which were not in compliance with human rights principles. ... The Government of the Slovak Republic will create a space for the fulfilment of the right of citizens, including the citizens belonging to minorities and persons with permanent residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic, to effectively participate in the administration of public affairs.”*<sup>94</sup>

Although the government programme did not include a separate section on national minorities in the part *State for the Citizens*, they paid great attention to them. First and foremost, there was an attempt to concentrate the activities in the hands of the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for the nationality policy. *“The Government of the Slovak Republic appoints the position of Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights and Minorities with strengthened management and decision-making powers in minority culture and education. While carrying out their duties, the Deputy Prime Minister will closely cooperate and consult with the representatives of national minorities. To ensure the exercise of co-deciding competencies of the Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and National Minorities in minority education, the Government of the Slovak Republic will adjust the structure of the Ministry of Education so that co-deciding can be implemented in the inspection of minority schools, ... In the field of education, the Government of the SR will promote the improvement of the teaching of the mother tongue, as well as the quality and efficiency of the teaching of the Slovak language in schools with the minority language of instruction. ... The Government of the Slovak Republic will therefore create the best possible conditions for the members of national minorities to exercise their right to express, preserve and develop their own identity.”* In the Government’s Programme Statement of 2010, the Government of the Slovak Republic undertook to fulfil also other tasks of minority policy. The emphasis was placed on interethnic dialogue, legislative incorporation of minority rights (the amendment of the Education Act, the

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93 In the further political development of Slovakia, these ideas have not found successors and also in the current government policy they are more of a caricature, rather in the form of random ideas than part of conceptual thinking and building a civil society based on solid foundations and meaningful policy.

94 Programme Statement of the Government of I. Radičová 2010.



Language law, the Act on Languages of National Minorities,<sup>95</sup> the Act on the Naming of Municipalities...), the support and modernization of minority education.<sup>96</sup>

Practical policy showed that these objectives were not easy to achieve, not only because they had to respect the coalition partners and their ideas of nationality policy and political and ideological limits (and deficits), but they also ran into a barrier of administrative bureaucracy, which was at least as difficult to combat as the coalition partners and the political opposition in Slovakia. This was also reflected in the fact that, despite the announced, contemporarily elaborated program line, the enthusiasm of political representatives for building a modern civil state, the effectiveness of the measures was not unambiguous. The opinion of the Advisory Committee for the *Framework Convention* stated that the changes in the institutional structure (the Government Council and VNMES) between 2010 and 2012 weakened the government's ability to effectively coordinate all issues related to the protection of national minorities. The Advisory Committee noted that significant steps had been taken, including legislative changes, to ensure a balance between the use of the official language and the right to use minority languages, but that their implementation should be more flexible. According to this opinion, the Government of the Slovak Republic was to effectively coordinate the protection of national minorities.<sup>97</sup> A comprehensive view from the outside evaluating the system and its functionality in terms of Slovak realities encountered the subjective perception of political representatives, who primarily perceived the "tiny", but certainly significant achievements. B. Bugár,

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95 In September 2010, the Government of I. Radičová approved an amendment to the Act on the Official Language, aiming to remove some restrictions on the use of minority languages. The protection of the official language, as well as the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, were to be ensured. Restrictions on national minorities introduced by the first government of R. Fico (compulsory use of the official language in official communication – police, transport, post offices; keeping bilingual documents in education; removal of mandatory order of texts in the official and minority language on memorials and information boards, the chronicle of the village could be kept in the minority language...). The most significant change concerned the imposition of fines for violations of the Act on Official Language. It was possible to fine only public administration bodies, and only if the public administration body did not make important information available to the public in the official language and refused to respect the warning of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic. The Act on the Use of Languages of National Minorities (No. 204/2011 Coll. with effect from 1 July 2011) was also amended. The law reduced the quorum for the use of minority languages from 20 % to 15 %, effective in ten years (after another census) and significantly expanded the possibilities for using minority languages (in official communication, health care, the judiciary, municipal signs, public information, compliance monitoring...). The law also made it possible to use language rights in municipalities, where in the number of members of national minorities fell below 15 % of the population. The long-standing problematic relationship between the Act on the Official Language and the Act on the Use of the Language of National Minorities was clarified.

96 Programme Statement of the Government of I. Radičová 2010; Third Report on the Implementation of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* in the Slovak Republic, p. 5-7. Resolutions from the meeting of the Government of the Slovak Republic. 11. 1. 2012.

97 *Aktuality*, 4. 6. 2015, Neznášanlivosť voči Rómom..., <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/277207/neznasanlivosť-voci-romom-ma-vlada-obmedzit-hovori-rada-europy/>

the chairman of Most-Híd, was an empathic politician with intuitive perception of small details. He responded to the report with the words: *“Could you imagine that any of the governments would be able to apologise in cases such as the Hedviga case? The fact that the government apologised to Hedviga reflects the change in the perception of Hungarians in Slovakia. We also adopted a law on the use of minority languages, which was a significant step forward. Under this law, bilingual signs can be placed even in places where it was not possible.”*<sup>98</sup>

The events and especially the legislation adopted in Hungary after 2010 were an important milestone in the history of Slovak-Hungarian relations. The policy of the extra-border Hungarian nation was reflected not only in the theoretical construction but also in practical legislative steps of Hungary, which significantly affected the interference of the state into the matters of neighbouring countries when taking care of the members of a unified Hungarian cultural nation across borders. The prominent Slovak historian Milan Zemko summed up this relationship as follows: *“Of course, the national minorities themselves must primarily define the demands to be discussed, the representatives of the majority nation should not “interpret” feelings or define the demands of the minority to be negotiated. As always, it is a matter of mutual understanding, based on mutual empathy, if there is any. If there is none, it needs to be created together. However, there is still one “catch” nowadays, and that is Hungary’s policy towards Hungarian minorities abroad. Our Hungarian politicians and intellectuals have repeatedly stated that the understanding and agreements between Slovaks and Hungarians must be achieved within Slovakia, that interstate relations between Slovakia and Hungary are a different, external issue, that this is how it works between the majority and minority population in other democratic countries. This is certainly true to a large extent, however, not completely. It is unheard of that, let’s say, Germany, as the “mother country” of German minorities, would interfere in the internal affairs of France, Belgium, Denmark, or Poland in the way that Hungary does with regard to Hungarian minorities in its neighbouring states.”*<sup>99</sup> This is not the first time in history when one state has claimed the right to intervene in the life of its neighbouring countries in the name of a united nation. Igor Matovič even suggested that the National Council of the SR takes a stance on the Hungarian constitution.<sup>100</sup>

In September, Foreign Minister M. Dzurinda was preparing to visit Budapest. The Minister was to go to Budapest with a strong message. The coalition already wanted to change Fico’s language act and his restrictive reaction to Hungarian dual citizenship in the parliament. Neither was successful. The language law was blocked by SaS’s stubbornness with regard to fines; and citizenship was complicated by

98 *Webnoviny*, 10. 7. 2014, Csáky s Bugárom nevedeli vážit’ slová..., <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/843801-bugar-csaky-s-durayom-nevedeli-vazit-slova-most-hid-to-vie/>

99 *Sme*, 13. 7. 2013, Zemko, M. Dvojnásobný Paríž a čo s tým dnes?

100 *Aktuality*, 20. 6. 2011, Spokojný nebudem ani s Bugárom, ani so sebou, rozhovor s G. Gálom. <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/188841/gabor-gal-spokojny-nebudem-ani-s-bugarom-ani-sam-so-sebou/>

KDH's proposal to fine Slovak Hungarians who would like to obtain Hungarian citizenship without staying in the country. Political scientist L. Öllös from the Forum of the Institute for Minority Research argued that the main problem is still the living prejudice that Hungarians pose a danger. This was also the position of the new government. *"When we see a danger in the other, we want to defeat them. We look for various tools to do this, such as legislation. When we see a partner in them, we look for what can be the common benefit from the situation,"* Öllös wrote. He believed that the Slovak-Hungarian disputes would not break the governing coalition, but would unnecessarily weaken it. The proof was the language law. *"This law is essentially wrong. Our basic position is that it should be abolished, unfortunately, there is no political will for that at the moment,"* László Solymos, the chairman of the parliamentary group, told Pravda.<sup>101</sup>

At the first meeting of VNMES on 6 June 2011, R. Chmel spoke about the ambition to prepare a long-term concept of state policy with regard to nationality policy *"in the foreseeable future"*. This was to be elaborated with an emphasis on the promotion of culture, education and languages of national minorities. He also explained this by the fact that the current situation is inconsistent and it is not possible to fully define what a national minority and ethnic group is in the legislation. He admitted that despite the presence of a certain concept in some areas of human rights, these concepts are not fully implemented. When asked by L. Öllös on the preparation of the principles of the Slovak Republic on minority policy, K. Petőcz, the Director General of the Human Rights and Equal Treatment Section, replied that the concept on minority policy is planned for November 2011 and is also part of the committee's work plan.<sup>102</sup>

The meeting of VNMES included an item *"Long-term conception of the minority policy of the state; preparation of the material"*, but, as pointed out by L. Öllös, the members of VNMES have not received any supporting material as of now.<sup>103</sup> László Juhász, General Director of the Section of National Minorities of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic, later clarified the idea of the SNM GO SR in the process of concept creation. According to him, the conceptual structure was sent to the members (it is not clear which members, as the members of VNEMS did not receive). The conceptual structure should be based on the articles of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. It was to *"comprehensively address the issues related to the state's relationship with persons belonging to national minorities, ... reflect the structure of the rights of national minorities given by the constitution, analyse the current situation, summarize the main shortcomings, propose solutions and create an effective system of measures to eliminate shortcomings."* The small ambition to create a permanently usable document was testified by the fact that the *"foundation for the creation of the concept"* was to be the Programme Statement of the Government of the Slovak Republic. The Deputy Prime Minister was to set up a working group in the

101 *Pravda*, 22. 9. 2010, Dzurinda ide do Pešti bez zmien Ficových národnostných zákonov.

102 The minutes from the inaugural meeting of VNMES 7. 6. 2011.

103 The minutes from the second meeting of VNMES, 19. 9. 2011.

near future, tasked with drawing up a concept. The members of the committee were to be employees of the departments of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic and invited experts. After a discussion in VNEMS, the draft was to be submitted to the Government Council, then to the interdepartmental comment procedure and subsequently to the Government meeting. K. Petőcz spoke about the fact that the concept should have been a part of the National Strategy for the Protection and Support of Human Rights in the Slovak Republic, which was prepared in 2011 by his department at the GO SR.<sup>104</sup> After the disintegration of I. Radičová's government due to the vote on the EU Bailout Fund, the coalition's plans remained unfulfilled.

The second government of Robert Fico (2012 – 2016) was approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic on 15 May 2012. After many years, it was the government of one political party, this time Smer-SD. The government identified the measures to mitigate the effects of the recent economic crisis and unemployment as essential. The programme statement from 2012 included a special section "*The Status of Minorities – a Permanent Part of Contemporary Slovak Society*", which, except for the creation of an unspecified function of a plenipotentiary, did not contain any fundamental obligations with regard to nationality policy. The reason was the definition of the status quo principle as a fundamental and supporting element of minority policy. "*The Government states that in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life, there has long been full and effective equality between persons belonging to national minorities and persons belonging to the majority. ... The Government considers the protection and promotion of the development of national minorities as a natural mission during the formation of modern Slovakia. ... will create conditions for the development of national minorities in the preservation and development of their identity, language, culture and traditions, which support the all-round development of the whole society. ... guarantees dignified conditions for the development of every national minority in the spirit of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, international treaties and conventions, while maintaining the status quo, balanced relations of the majority nation with national minorities, through a tolerant dialogue in the Slovak society. The Government will establish the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities and Civil Society with appropriate coordination and decision-making powers.*"<sup>105</sup> The Government of the Slovak Republic committed to protecting favourable conditions for the use of minority languages in the Slovak Republic and to promote the minority culture.<sup>106</sup>

104 The minutes from the second meeting of VNEMS, 19. 9. 2011.

105 Programme Statement of the Government of R. Fico 2012. These parts of the Programme Statement subsequently appeared in the argumentation for the monitoring reports of international documents. E.g. Fourth report on the implementation of the *Framework Convention* in the Slovak Republic; Fifth report on the implementation of the *Framework Convention* in the Slovak Republic.

106 Programme Statement of the Government of R. Fico 2012; Report on the state of the use of languages of national minorities in the territory of the Slovak Republic in 2017-2018, p. 12; *Teraz*, 27. 4. 2012, Vláda schválila programové vyhlásenie.

Three ministers (D. Čaplovič, P. Pellegrini and J. Draxler)<sup>107</sup> changed on the position of the Minister of Education in this government, the position of the Minister of Culture was held by M. Maďarič. Although the government claimed to maintain the status quo, one of their first steps was to abolish the post of the Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and Minorities. It was to be replaced by the position of the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities, who, however, did not have a legislative initiative or real executive powers. From the beginning, Smer planned to appoint a person from outside of Smer to the position. The former Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and Minorities R. Chmel called the reorganization chaotic. *“Civil society is a wide and autonomous structure that requires a separate executive branch. Similarly to the human rights agenda, which has unforgivably dropped out of the programme statement.”*<sup>108</sup>

After the position of Deputy Prime Minister, who was responsible for the issue of national minorities during the second Fico's Government (2012 – 2016) was abolished, the agenda related to international agreements and their monitoring and relations with bodies of international institutions were guaranteed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other matters related to minority issues were managed by departmental ministries (education, culture, transport, interior...). The government's plenipotentiary for national minorities was to become the umbrella body for minority policy. The position was filled on 14 June 2012 by the representative of Most-Híd, L. Nagy. The Plenipotentiary also became the Chairman of VNMES, which is a permanent advisory body to the Government Council. The biggest shortcoming of the reform was that the Plenipotentiary, his office, and VNMES, which he was the chairman of, had only an advisory function. Effectively they became the executive apparatus of the Government Office of the SR and the administrative and service workplace for the preparation of monitoring reports on the rights and status of national minorities and did not have a direct impact on the Government of the SR. L. Nagy served as the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities until 1 July 2013, when he resigned in protest of the Parliament's disapproval of an amendment to the law on the use of the language of national minorities, which he submitted to Most-Híd to improve the marking of railway stations in the languages of national minorities. He was replaced by M. Jedličková, who carried out the orders from superiors, but did

107 The greatest discussions and conflicts during the period under review were about the content of teaching, curricula (e.g. history - as can be seen from this publication, there are many differences between the interpretation of history by Slovak and Hungarian historiography), the abolition of small schools (minority schools were mostly in smaller municipalities and were endangered by the lack of pupils), the financing of schools (gradually the limit for pupils of minority schools increased to 113 %), the use of geographical names (since 1910, there has been a designation of every locality in Slovakia in Hungarian, on the other hand, Czechoslovak authorities after 1918, but also after 1948 gave Hungarian municipalities Slovak names instead of historical names, e.g. after important Slovak personalities), about the way of teaching the Slovak language (state authorities have long refused to allow the teaching of Slovak as a foreign language), but also about other problems.

108 *Sme*, 3. 5. 2012, Ľudské práva Smer cíti sociálne.

not have the competencies, opportunities or willingness to creatively and proactively solve the problems of national minorities, work conceptually and prepare visions or proposals to change or improve activities that the office was created for. In November 2013, minorities in VNMES, with the support of M. Jedličková, agreed that each minority will have one vote in VNMES, thus eliminating the advantage of larger minorities who previously had more votes. VNMES addressed the issue of financing minority cultures, minority education, participated in the preparation of monitoring reports on the status of minorities for domestic and international institutions. According to B. Bugár, the promised status quo did not apply to minorities, their rights were even reduced. *“These are the indications that make life difficult for the Hungarians as well, not to mention the fact that the Hungarians, like the Slovaks or anyone else, struggle with unemployment.”* The Hungarian dance ensemble *Ifjú Szívek* has not had a director for several months, he was dismissed just like that. They have changed the representation of minorities in the Council for National Minorities so that even a 3,000-strong minority has one vote, as does a 500,000-strong minority, and small minorities, if united, can outvote the large ones. *“Hence, of course, life is worse for a Hungarian,”* B. Bugár criticized the situation, saying that it was a hint that we were returning to the well-known Robert Fico from the time of his first government.<sup>109</sup>

The Deputy Chairman of Most-Híd, L. Solymos described the government’s activities in the protection of human rights and national minorities as intentional inaction. Nothing has been done in the area of improving education in the mother tongue, there is less and less money to support the culture of minorities, inconsistencies in legislation concerning the use of the language of national minorities were not eliminated. He pointed out that the opposition had submitted 304 proposals to the parliament in two years, however, only six had been passed. Nevertheless, the National Council of the Slovak Republic approved all 163 proposals submitted by the government.<sup>110</sup> Although this phenomenon was typical for all governments in Slovakia.

K. Petőcz pointed out the absence of a constructive nationality policy in Slovakia after a criticized meeting of the Hungarian Parliamentary Committee on National Fellowship at the University of Komárno in September 2012: *“Unless the state itself creates the conditions for the members of minorities to feel really at home, and unless there is a real dialogue, it cannot blame their civic associations for “complaining” to someone who is at least willing to listen to them. After all, what is the average member of the Hungarian minority supposed to think about the kindness of the state, when he sees, for example, the difficulties surrounding the application of the law on the language of minorities?”*<sup>111</sup>

Hungarian participants in the dialogue on nationality policy were criticized by the publisher and director of *Kalligram* László Szigeti: *“There are several participants*

109 *Aktuálne*, 4. 1. 2014, Maďarom sa žije na Slovensku horšie. <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/243071/madarom-sa-zije-na-slovensku-horsie-priznava-bela-bugar/>

110 *Webnoviny*, 12. 5. 2014, Smer klamal voličom, istoty dával len svojim..., <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/821241-smer-klamal-volicov-istoty-dava-len-svojim-tvrdi-most-hid/>

111 *Sme*, 30. 6. 2012, Petőcz, K. Hranice suverenity a národná politika.

*in this situation. One is the Strana maďarskej koalície (Party of the Hungarian Coalition SMK), which has been long maintaining the revisionist spirit of the nationally radical Miklós Duray, supported morally, financially and in the media by Fidesz. Another is the Republic of Hungary as a state. The current form of its more or less sophisticated revisionism is enshrined in public institutions born from Orbán's Fidesz under the leadership of Zsolt Németh and under the strong inspiration of Miklós Duray and the nationally radical bishop of Romania, László Tőkés. In addition to the Forum of Hungarian Deputies of the Carpathian Basin (enforced by former Hungarian Parliament Speaker Katalin Szili, the head of the socialist wing with a more nationalist sentiment), other institutes guaranteeing and regulating the legal relationship between the Hungarian state and Hungarian foreign parties, organizations and citizens of other countries of Hungarian nationality are: the Hungarian Standing Conference, the Hungarian Nationality Law and the Law on Dual Citizenship. The official philosophy of Fidesz's Hungarian fellowship is public revisionism, and whether the Slovaks like it or not, it will have a moral justification until the Slovak Republic takes a legislative initiative regarding the legal status of Hungarians in Slovakia. As long as the Slovak legislature is narrow-minded in this aspect, the Hungarian collective awareness in Slovakia will expect legislative and institutional recognition of their national collective existence outside Hungary. I am afraid that until then, part of Hungarians will not feel at home in Slovakia at all, and some only partially. The third participant is Most-Híd with their program based on partnership and creative coexistence. It is a minority policy that respects the principles of the European arrangement after the Second World War and which, in addition to the awareness of the gross historical injustice, contains a cardinal, fundamental point that further emancipation of the Hungarian minority and other minorities in Slovakia and their higher participation in public policy-making in Slovakia can only be achieved with the participation of a fourth partner, i.e. together with the Slovak majority, with their generous law-making.”<sup>112</sup>*

The speech of Prime Minister R. Fico at the conference on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Matica slovenská, where he declared that we did not establish Slovakia for minorities, was a manifestation of the growing national populism. The Prime Minister pointed out a special tendency, a strange one in his opinion, that the problems of minorities are being pushed into front everywhere, at the expense of the state-forming nation. *“As if Slovaks did not even live in Slovakia. I want to stop the extortion of minority rights, and it doesn't matter if it is the minority of the Roma, people with a different orientation, or a different opinion. It is true that the state is national and the society is civil.”* SMK and Most-Híd also objected to this statement.<sup>113</sup> Former

112 Sme, 24. 7. 2010, Szigeti, L. Jest' puding nožom na ryby.

113 *Hospodárske noviny*, 7. 10. 2013, Sliz, M. Eurosocialisti s Ficom nie sú spokojní. In later statements, he repeated this thesis in connection with migration in an anti-immigration form more friendly to the indigenous minorities living here. *“We did not primarily establish our independent state for minorities, however much we respect them, but mostly for the Slovak state-forming nation.”* But even the modified version, which explains the genesis of the state, but not

Deputy Prime Minister for Minorities R. Chmel also responded to the Prime Minister's words on 26 February. According to him, the Prime Minister resigned from the fact that he wanted to be the Prime Minister of all Slovak citizens. He thought that the head of the cabinet created two categories of citizens – Slovaks and Non-Slovaks, saying that the latter are just demanding takers. Chmel believed that the Prime Minister is preventing the relatively well-developing relations with minorities at home. *“The Prime Minister thus legitimizes the nationalists and neo-guardists not only in Matica slovenská, prevents a relatively well-developing relationship with minorities at home, and by playing this broken record again, he has apparently forgotten his weak moment when he wanted to be the Prime Minister of all Slovak citizens.”*<sup>114</sup>

In the opinion of RHS, the Slovak Republic is a state of all its citizens, regardless of their minority status, and it is inconceivable that the order of their importance should be determined by politicians. According to the association, the statements of the Prime Minister prove that the leading politicians do not understand the problems of their own state, and they do not realize the weight of these problems. The statement said: *“Ethnic and national minorities in Slovakia are estimated to make up more than one-fifth of the population, and if we add to them the unspecified “opinion” minorities according to the Prime Minister, it is the vast majority of the population. Every citizen is, therefore, part of some minority, and it is very dangerous to discredit their problems and call them insignificant, as this would question the essence of Slovak democracy.”*<sup>115</sup>

The difference between Fico's first and second governments with regard to nationality policy was again expressed by L. Szigeti: *“He has more cultured rhetoric now. I miss the address of the Roma and Hungarian minorities showing they are also citizens of this country. I see a deficit there. I consider it an error that the human rights package has been transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, the issue of human rights will only become a foreign policy issue when we make mistakes and criticism follows.”*<sup>116</sup> There were also differences in the position in international policy. In relation to Hungary, the government without the SNS was more cautious in relation to minorities, especially to the Hungarians.

The next elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic took place on 5 March 2016. On 23 March 2016, the President of the Slovak Republic appointed a new Government of the Slovak Republic composed initially of the representatives of Smer-SD, the SNS, Most-Híd and #Siet'. The party #Siet' disintegrated shortly after the election due to internal problems. R. Fico was the head of government until 22 March 2018, when he was replaced by P. Pellegrini after mass demonstrations related to the

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the meaning of its existence in relation to its citizens, did not improve the perception of the state of Slovak nation, where minorities are only entitled to be loyal citizens.

114 *Aktuálne*, 2. 3. 2013, Fico útokmi na menšiny odpútava pozornosť od nezamestnanosti, <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/moste-i-smk-sa-zhodli-utokmi-na-mensiny-fico-odputava-pozornost-od-nezamestnanosti/slovensko/politika/>

115 *Webnoviny*, 26. 2. 2013, Premiér pobúril Maďarov..., <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/premier-poburil-madarov-podla-nich/637088-clanok.html>

116 *Pravda*, 12. 7. 2012, V čom je rozdiel medzi súčasnou a prvou vládou Róberta Fica.



murder of journalist J. Kuciak and his fiancée. The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of the Environment was L. Solymos, Á. Érsek was the Minister of Transport and Construction. The government of P. Pellegrini took power with “a slightly modified” Government’s Programme Statement, therefore we will not pay attention to him. In the *Government’s Programme Statement of the Slovak Republic for 2016 – 2020*, the newly appointed Government of the Slovak Republic endorsed European democratic traditions of freedom, human dignity and tolerance in the fight against fascism and right-wing extremism.

The Government was determined to strengthen the policy of understanding and reconciliation of citizens of all nationalities of Slovakia and thus start a new era of support for national minorities, which was declared in the introductory passages of the programme statement.

The Government’s Programme Statement from 2016 included a special section devoted to minorities entitled “*Support Policy for National Minorities*”. It stated that “...it considers the protection and support of the development of national minorities to be its natural mission in the shaping of modern society.” The Government promised to provide “*effective protection for national minorities and the rights and freedoms belonging to these minorities within the rule of law with respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity*” to guarantee “*decent conditions for the development of every national minority in accordance with the Constitution and international treaties ... protect national minorities, ... to create conditions for the development of national minorities in terms of preservation and development of their identity, language, culture and traditions.*” The Government undertook to ensure the compliance of the Railways Law with the Law on the Use of the Language of National Minorities in terms of marking the names of railway stations and stops in ethnically mixed territories and to continue changes in the financing of culture. Following the creation of the Audio-visual Fund and the Fund for the Support of the Arts, the Government undertook to create the Fund for the Financing of Minority Cultures, which would systematically support the cultural and artistic activities of national minorities.<sup>117</sup>

In terms of policy to support national minorities, the Government of the Slovak Republic further undertook to: support the exemption of all small schools from compulsory quotas in a linguistically mixed areas; increase the support and ensure the development of education for children and pupils belonging to national minorities in their mother tongue; support a change in the methodology of teaching of the Slovak language at minority schools in the interest of its better command; support vocational education and training in schools with the language of instruction of national minorities, including vocational education and training in the dual education system; strengthen the material and technical equipment of schools, the creation of textbooks and other educational resources and the continuous education of pedagogical and professional staff at schools with the language of instruction of national minorities;

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117 Programme Statement of the Government of R. Fico from 2016. Report on the Status and Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities 2016. We do not address parts of the programme statement on Roma issues in this work.

promote teaching about the life of national minorities living in the Slovak Republic and their history in the context of preventing and combating extremism, nationalism and extreme behaviour in primary and secondary schools; support specific tasks in the mission of universities in terms of the development of national minorities, their culture, language, history research, ethnology, etc. and encourage the consideration of these specific tasks in the evaluation of higher education. The Government undertook to create conditions for the compliance of practice with the valid legislation on the use of languages of national minorities in ethnically mixed territories.<sup>118</sup>

Prime Minister Fico, under the influence of the new coalition partner Most-Híd, changed his rhetoric. On the occasion of the joint opening of the Komárom – Komárno bridge on the Slovak side of the bridge in October 2017, Slovak Prime Minister “*was pleased to remind*” Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán that his government is doing everything to make the Hungarian national minority feel good. “*I must also thank my coalition partner Béla Bugár for the fact that, according to the Government’s Programme Statement, we have done more recently than has been done in previous periods.*” He also reminded that this was possible only because there is no tension in Slovak-Hungarian relations.<sup>119</sup>

Although this is slightly beyond our scope, it must be mentioned that after the 2016 elections, SNS did not use and abuse Slovak-Hungarian relations within the coalition. Although there were small issues, they observed the agreement on a consensual resolution with a Hungarian-Slovak partner in the government. Even when the preferences of SNS started declining sharply, the party did use the Hungarian issue to mobilize their former supporters. However, their main opponents in the race for the votes of the electorate were not minority parties, but parties of extremist and national populist nature.

The Chairman of Most-Híd B. Bugár viewed the coalition government as beneficial for minorities and minority rights. “*I am in the fourth government and we have never been able to do so much before. And that’s important to me.*”<sup>120</sup> An important step of the government was the establishment of the Fund for the Support of the Culture of National Minorities, approved by the government in the spirit of the Government’s Programme Statement in 2017, so that its structures could be operational as

118 Programme Statement of the Government of R. Fico from 2016. Report on the Status and Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities 2016. Since April 2016, L. Bukovszky has taken over the position of Plenipotentiary for National Minorities, thus ending the era of the “official” Plenipotentiary Jedličková. One of his most important tasks was the creation of the Fund for the Support of the Culture of National Minorities and the Stabilization and Depoliticisation of the Culture of National Minorities, the improvement of the Office’s methodological and advisory activities, the restart of the activities that the Office lacked in the recent years. He announced the ambition to prepare and put into practice the law on national minorities, which would represent the legislative form of the conceptual minority policy of the state, however, he failed to do so.

119 *Postoj*, 17. 10. 2017 <https://www.postoj.sk/27637/fico-a-orban-otvorili-v-komarome-stavbu-cezhranicneho-mosta-na-dunaji>

120 *Denník N*, 23. 11. 2017, Ak ma neporazí, budem ešte kandidovať (rozhovor M. Tódovej s B. Bugárom).

early as 2018.<sup>121</sup> The marking of railway stations with bilingual signs was implemented,<sup>122</sup> as well as other changes in the use of language, education and culture, small, but visible to the Hungarian population. The party's representatives focused in particular on the preservation of small classes, the strengthening of bilingualism or the change in the teaching of the Slovak language at minority schools. The coalition partner, the chairman of the SNS, A. Danko, assessed the cooperation as advantageous for Most-Híd, because they gained decent positions, although he did not forget to remind the limits of cooperation: "*This is our state and our territory.*"<sup>123</sup>

None of the Slovak governments had the ambition to prepare a comprehensive document that would determine the basic characteristics of the state concept of nationality policy and define the basic coordinates of the status, rights and obligations, the institutional provision of these rights. All this is despite the fact that the monitored years in Slovakia could be called years of strategies, concepts and action plans for various important areas of society. These are the documents that contain the theses, plans and tasks related to the issue of national minorities.

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- 121 A significant change occurred after the adoption of Act No. 138/2017 Coll. on the Fund for the Support of the Culture of National Minorities. With effect from 1 July 2017, it created an institution providing effective and systematic support for cultural and artistic activities of all national minorities in the Slovak Republic, administratively independent of central state administration bodies, represented by experts from all national minorities. The fund was an independent public organization by law, headed by a director. Three expert commissions were set up for the Hungarian minority to assess three different priority areas, in which the minority decides on the priorities and distribution of funds. Each expert commission elected its chairman and each national minority elected a member of the board of directors. A. Lovász was appointed for the Hungarian minority, he also became the chairman of the Fund's Board of Directors. Another source of support for the culture of national minorities was the budget chapter of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, which financed eight museums of national minorities, which were in the organizational structure of the Slovak National Museum. Among them is the Museum of Hungarian Culture in Slovakia. The Ifjú Szivek Dance Theater was financed from the budget chapter of the GO of the SR. Four minority theatres were financed from the budgets of higher territorial units – two Hungarian (Thália – Hungarian National Theater in Košice; Jókai Theatre – Hungarian National Theater in Komárno). Broadcasting for national minorities was financed from the budget of the public media Slovak Television and Slovak Radio (later RTVS). At the same time, it should be mentioned that a large part of the funds to support local and regional culture went through the self-governments of municipalities and HTU. (these are mainly libraries, educational centres and facilities, observatories and planetariums, regional and local museums and galleries, theatres that reflect the local, thus the ethnic culture of the local population within the region.)
- 122 The Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities L. Bukovszky carried out significant activities in the field of the use of minority languages (preparation of translation and terminological dictionaries, legislation amendment, use of minority languages in public administration, education of officials in minority languages, traffic signs and signs in municipalities and railway stations...).
- 123 *Webnoviny*, 6. 1. 2017, Danko: Most a Bugár získali pre Maďarov slušné pozície, <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/1131056-danko-most-a-bugar-ziskali-pre-madarov-slusne-pozicie/>

The “*National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Slovak Republic*” (the National Strategy) was to play an important role among such conceptual materials. It should also have included the concept of minority policy. Its organizational preparation began in 2011 during the government of I. Radičová, as the initiative and with the contribution of people who had long been involved in the civil policy and human rights (R. Chmel, K. Petőcz...). The structure of the strategy was to copy the thematic areas covering the individual committees of the Government Council.<sup>124</sup> There were great expectations with regard to the *National Strategy*, as this was to be the first time that a comprehensive document would be created in Slovakia, with the aim to improve the national protection and the promotion of human rights. The material was to be prepared “in a participatory dialogue” so that all participants in the human rights agenda, public administration, independent institutions, academics and civil society could be involved in the preparation process. The strategy was to be a comprehensive document reflecting the modern understanding of human rights in terms of the international legal obligations of the Slovak Republic as a member of the UN, the Council of Europe, the EU and other international organizations. It was expected to be submitted in June 2014.<sup>125</sup> The project was managed by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, as the Chairman of the Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality. The co-guarantor was to be the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society.

*The National Strategy* was approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 18 February 2015 and was to form a comprehensive foundation for further creation of human rights policies. The programme document included a section on policy towards national minorities. It was entitled “Source material for the part of the strategy concerning the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups”. It formed an annex to the National Strategy. It was prepared in April 2014 by M. Jedličková, the temporary Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities. The 2015 Report on the Status and Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities states that “it identifies the priorities and tasks whose fulfilment is aimed at improving the position of persons belonging to national minorities. These cover legislation, culture, education, language, media, promotion of the development of participatory mechanisms and strengthening the role of advisory bodies, including strengthening the capacity of organizational units ensuring these mechanisms and strengthening comprehensive research on national minorities.”<sup>126</sup>

The first seven pages of the 14-page document described the status and legislative justification of frameworks in which national minorities exist in Slovakia to confirm the basic thesis from the introduction that the scope of national minority rights in Slovakia “corresponds to an internationally recognized standard of pro-

124 The minutes from the IX. meeting of VNMES, 22. 5. 2013.

125 Fourth report on the implementation of the *Framework Convention* in the SR.

126 Report on the Status and Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities 2015; Minutes from XIX. meeting of VNMES, 17. 12. 2015.

tection of national minorities and ethnic groups, while the legal framework for the status of national minorities respects the principles of equality and non-discrimination.” The second part is focused on the monitoring of the rights of national minorities by international institutions in relation to the fulfilment of obligations under the *European Charter ...* and the *Framework Convention*. The third part of the document is focused on the institutional support of the rights of national minorities. Especially advisory bodies of the government (Government Council and VNMES), central state bodies (Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and National Minorities, Plenipotentiary for National Minorities, Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, and the ministries). This was followed by a brief mention of independent institutions (ombudsman and SNSLP) and local governments. The last two pages, “*Priorities and Tasks for the Future*” were supposed to be essential, the reason why the materials and the *National Strategy* were created. The priorities were briefly described in bullet points. In terms of legislation: preparation of a comprehensive and integral legal regulation of the status of national minorities; in terms of culture: creating mechanisms to provide institutional support for minority organizations, taking into account the subsidiary approach “*increasing appropriate types of competences at regional and local level*”, reducing administrative burdens and creating flexible support mechanisms for professional artistic bodies; In education, training and language: taking into account the specifics of the educational needs of national minorities, education in the spirit of tolerance, intercultural and interethnic approach, measures for the use of minority language in parts of municipalities and cities; In media: effective use of public media to build inclusive awareness of the majority population about the minority, take steps to eliminate negative stereotypes about minorities; In participation: support the development of participatory mechanisms, strengthening the competencies of advisory bodies, strengthening the capacities of these bodies; In research: strengthen comprehensive research on national minorities.<sup>127</sup> The source material was descriptive, superficial, it contained neither the basic problems of minorities nor the basic lines of state minority policy. The strategic objectives did not go beyond the term of office of the temporary Plenipotentiary and did not set out the tasks that needed to be addressed in terms of state minority policy, in terms of the status and rights of national minorities and in terms of the ministries directly concerned.

The fate of the *National Strategy* in the period after its adoption was problematic. It became part of the administrative agenda (there was an important point recorded in the reporting – Slovakia has prepared a strategy on human rights issues) and its life was to be reflected in the adopted action programmes for individual human rights schemes. A year later, K. Petőcz commented on the problem: “*A year ago, the government adopted a human rights strategy that could have been their*

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127 Východiskový materiál k časti Stratégie ochrany a podpory ľudských práv v Slovenskej republike týkajúcej sa osôb patriacich k národnostným menšinám a etnickým skupinám. [https://www.narodnostnemensiny.gov.sk/data/files/4807\\_vychodiskovy-material-k-casti-strategie-k-pravam-narodnostnych-mensin.pdf](https://www.narodnostnemensiny.gov.sk/data/files/4807_vychodiskovy-material-k-casti-strategie-k-pravam-narodnostnych-mensin.pdf)

agenda. Except for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, however, no member of the government has since referred to the said document. The strategy has no “owner”, as the position of the member of the Government responsible for human rights policies was abolished right at the beginning of the strategy. Last year, the Government enacted the independent institutes of the Commissioner for Children and the Commissioner for People with Disabilities. However, if Smer has the same relationship with both institutes as they have with the Ombudsman institute, their establishment did not make much sense.”<sup>128</sup>

By a resolution of 18 February 2015 approving the *National Strategy*, the Government of the Slovak Republic instructed the Head of the Government Office to draw up “action plans for those vulnerable and marginalized groups which were not provided legislative frameworks, institutional frameworks and separate strategies and frameworks of application practice” by 31 December 2015. In 2015, the Office of the Plenipotentiary, in cooperation with the Committee, prepared a draft *Action Plan for the Protection of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and Ethnic Groups for 2016-2020* in a “participatory manner” with participation of the representatives of national minorities. The members of the Temporary Working Group prepared a draft main objective of the Action Plan for areas that were defined in the “*Source Material (Annex No.1 of the Strategy)*”. At the XIX. meeting of the VNMES, which took place on 17 December 2015, the Committee approved the draft *Action Plan* by 11 votes, with two abstentions.<sup>129</sup>

In the discussion, however, K. Szekeres, a member of the committee for the Hungarian national minority, described it as vague, as it “does not contain all the requirements of the representatives of national minorities”. The reason why the plan was to be prepared was change and, as she stated, she did not register this change. She asked the question “why the committee draws up annual evaluation reports on the promotion of national minority culture, the condition of minority education and the use of the national minority languages, if they are not taken into account at all in the drafting of the concept document”.<sup>130</sup>

According to the submitters, the main objective of the action plan was “ensuring an effective, comprehensible and reliable system of protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups, including the strengthening of institutional provision.” The objective was elaborated into seven operational objectives: 1 ensuring a comprehensive approach to the creation of legal regulations concerning the rights and status of national minorities; 2 improving the system of promoting the culture of national minorities and ethnic groups; 3 more effective consideration of the specifics of the educational needs of persons belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups; 4 improving the conditions for the use of the languages of national minorities and ethnic groups in practice; 5 improving public awareness about national minorities and ethnic groups

128 *Dennik N*, 16. 2. 2016, Petőcz, K. Volebné program a ľudské práva.

129 Report on the Status and Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities 2015.

130 Minutes from XIX. meeting of VNMES, 17. 12. 2015.

in the media; 6 improving mechanisms for the participation of persons belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups in decision-making on matters concerning them; 7 increase the knowledge base serving for better identification of target groups – national minorities and ethnic groups and their needs through statistical surveys and research.<sup>131</sup> *The action plan* did not take the form of conceptual strategic material and neither had the ambition nor the opportunity to replace the concept of state policy towards national minorities.

Each of the operational objectives was elaborated to the level of specific measures and activities, which include performance indicators, implementation deadlines, responsible managers, cooperating entities and sources of funding.

In the middle of the effectiveness of the *Action Plan*, administrative preparations for its implementation were completed and working groups created to set their objectives. The administrative nature of the *Action Plan* was also apparent from the fact that life went on even without the National Strategy and the *Action Plan*, and the ministries implemented their specific activities from the moment that new officials of the new government took office and started to implement the objectives of their political leaders, and fortunately also the measures based on expert analysis and experience practical experts. VNMES regularly discussed the implementation of the *Action Plan* as part of the meeting agenda. Until the end of the period under review, VNMES members received information on the implementation of the seven priorities of the Action Plan, which form a separate annex to the minutes of each committee meeting. Also due to the activities of the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities L. Bukovszky, the *Action Plan* became more meaningful as coordination and control mechanisms (seminars, workshops, regular information on individual goals) were created as its part, which enabled the fulfilment of partial goals of the Plenipotentiary and his mission.

In no case can the *Action Plan*, similarly to the approved *National Strategy*, be considered a concept of national (minority) policy of the state. The setting of objectives and their implementation had to be managed by individual ministries, as these issues were part of their agenda. Neither the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities, nor VNMES as a “participatory” body, nor the Government Council as an advisory body, had either the competence, the means or the possibilities to implement them. They optimistically monitored (checked and discussed) everything and then, with the help of dedicated (selected) administration, organized and prepared, reports for domestic and foreign institutions to document the success of Slovak nationality policy, which is extraordinary and there might not be the like which in Europe (perhaps even in the world).

The resolutions adopted by VNMES mostly merely acknowledged the receipt of the information on the commissions and the *Action Plan*, however, no tasks for VNMES resulted from it.

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131 Action Plan for the Protection of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and Ethnic Groups for 2016-2020.

Although Slovak political representations did not try (failed, were not interested) to create a comprehensive opinion (program, concept) on the issue of national minorities, which would be reflected in the program document, stronger constitutional definition of the status of minorities or a comprehensive law on national minorities, they were aware of this deficit. They compensated for this by incorporating minority issues into various “strategic” documents and subsequently (or not subsequently) into implementing “action plans”.

Since 2000, “*Action Plans for the Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination, Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Other Manifestations of Intolerance*” have been prepared for two-year periods, focusing on several aspects of social and cultural life. They also included issues related to national minorities.<sup>132</sup> *The Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance for 2016 – 2018* was adopted. It was a follow up on the priorities identified in the *National Strategy*. The main objective of this concept document was to prevent the emergence of prejudice, stereotypes and hate speech based on national, racial, ethnic, religious and other similar intolerance, as well as to prevent the emergence and spread of attitudes and activities that promote racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance.

On 13 January 2016, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved the *Action Plan for the Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination for the years 2016 – 2019*. Its objective was to increase society’s awareness of non-discrimination and streamline the anti-discrimination legislation. It was to renew the practice of previous years by adopting a strategy paper with a general focus on this area.<sup>133</sup>

The “*Concept for Combating Extremism for 2015 – 2019*”, adopted by a resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic on 18 March 2015, was one of the important concept documents affecting also the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. The concept defined the strategic priorities of the SR in the elimination of radicalization, extremism and the related anti-social activities threatening the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals and the foundations of a democratic state governed by the rule of law. It included particular actions against manifestations of hatred towards groups of the population based on gender, race, colour, sexual orientation, religion or social class, including ethnicity or nationality.

From May 2018, the internal team of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic started working on the Strategy of Regional Culture and Culture of National Minorities. The strategy was prepared on the basis of the Government’s Programme Statement and was to be adopted by March 2019. “*The aim of the Strategy is to create comprehensive and long-term development of local and national minority culture as part of sustainable, dynamic and inclusive community development and modern, cre-*

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132 Second Report on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in the Slovak Republic, p. 19.

133 Report on the Status and Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities 2016; Report on the Status and Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities 2017 – 2018.



*ative and innovative economy in regions, towns and villages of Slovakia.*”<sup>134</sup> It should be mentioned that there was already the *Strategy for the Development of Culture in Slovakia for the years 2014 – 2020* at that time, and a new strategy for the years 2020 – 2030 was to be prepared.

Another important document, also important for national minorities, was the National Action Plan for the Census of Population, Housing and Dwellings 2021 for 2017 – 2020. After six meetings, an expert working group under the auspices of the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities and the Statistical Office, prepared a *Census Methodology in terms of Nationality or Ethnicity with regard to the Mother Tongue*.<sup>135</sup> If we originally wanted to emphasize that Slovakia does not have strategies for national minorities, we must state that the Slovak Republic has an incredible number of strategies and action plans with regard to national minorities and it has even more strategists, it just does not have a nationality policy in terms of systemic conceptual policy consensually accepted by political representations and the population of Slovakia. It has not been prepared, it has not been discussed and it has not been addressed. What has been addressed are partial strategies and action plans that combine the activities of individual ministries to ensure an acceptable model of coexistence of the majority model of their agenda and national minorities, in compliance with the international documents binding the Slovak Republic. Their strength, influence and effect correspond to the extent to which important positions at ministries are filled by officials nominated by political parties which have the minority policy in their agenda. Which also affects whether or not there is a minority political party in the governing coalition.

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134 Minutes from XXXI. meeting of VNMES, 27. 11. 2018.

135 Minutes from XXXII. meeting of VNMES, 8. 2. 2019.

# Hungarian National Policy and the Hungarian Minority in Slovakia

Although this monograph focuses on Slovak minority policy, it is not possible to leave out the Hungarian national policy in the years under review. It significantly concerns also the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, which, like the Hungarians from other neighbouring countries of Hungary, is the object of this policy, the consumer of its production and its participant. The second reason is that Slovak nationality policy often responds to the steps taken by the Hungarian governments.

Hungary understands national policy as taking care of Hungarian minorities abroad and considers it an important political priority. They use various names for the Hungarian policy relating to Hungarians living in neighbouring countries, not only the national policy (*nemzetpolitika*), but also the policy abroad (*határontúli politika*) or the policy of Hungary (*magyarságpolitika*).<sup>136</sup>

In Hungary, nationality policy towards minorities at home is marginal. Minorities in Hungary are in a position requiring special protection. They only need basic support to preserve their existence. The establishment of self-governing, autonomous minority community bodies is important for these minorities, as well as for the state, in order to prevent their further assimilation and extinction and to enable them to participate in regional policy.<sup>137</sup>

As the Hungarian elites on both sides of the border often point out, they could be an inspiration to Slovakia. At the same time, however, it is necessary to accept the different situation of Slovaks in Hungary and Hungarians in Slovakia, with regard to historical, through demographic, educational, cultural, assimilation and many other factors, which do not allow the Slovak policy, although it likes to be inspired by foreign models, to adopt the Hungarian model of minority policy.

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136 SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. National Policy of Hungarian Governments (based on selected aspects). In ŠUTAJ, Š – HELDÁKOVÁ, L. – REGINÁČOVÁ, N. (eds). *Current Issues of Research on Nationality Policy and Nationality Relations in Slovakia in the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries*. Prešov, Univerzum, 2017, p. 88-109; SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. Fragments of the National Policy of Hungarian Governments with Respect to the Governments of Viktor Orbán. In ĎURKOVSKÁ, M. – ŠUTAJ, Š. – REGINÁČOVÁ, N. (eds.). *Ethnic Relations in Slovakia at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Košice: Šafárikpress, 2020, p.142-167.

137 SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. – ŠUTAJ, Š. *Starostlivosť o krajanov v zahraničí v politike Slovenska a Maďarska*. Košice: Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV, 2008, CD-ROM, 141 p.; SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. – ŠUTAJ, Š. *Národnostná politika vládnucich politických strán v Maďarsku a na Slovensku (s ohľadom na slovensko-maďarské vzťahy). Kormányzati pártok kisebbség politikája Magyarországon és Szlovákiában 1989 után (külön tekintettel a magyar-szlovák kapcsolatokra)*. Košice: Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV, 2006, CD-ROM, 235 s. – [http://www.svusav.sk/data/uploads/publikacie/narodnostna\\_politika\\_2006.pdf](http://www.svusav.sk/data/uploads/publikacie/narodnostna_politika_2006.pdf)

The position presented by the Fidesz is decisive for the Hungarian policy in the period under review.<sup>138</sup> Especially its leading personality Viktor Orbán. At this point, we cannot further analyse the activities of this important figure with regard to the Hungarian national policy, and is not our aim either.<sup>139</sup> He managed to gain the support of the Hungarians also by using historical and cultural contexts for the benefit of his policy. Liberal and socialist concepts of resolving the position of minorities and mutual relations with neighbours, which prefer peaceful neighbourly coexistence and not interfering in the internal affairs of neighbouring states, did not represent a significant counterweight to his state policy in the period under review. Since gaining political power in 2010, Fidesz has not only secured a majority in the government, in the parliament, but has gradually gained control of the judiciary, the prosecutor's office, the Constitutional Court, the office of the President, and he managed to appoint his people for positions in the state media, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, education and offices. He secured his people in the Judges' Council, the media and the Prosecutor's office. *"The current opposition is in a hopeless situation,"* said the psychiatrist, writer and important figure among Slovak Hungarians P. Hunčík.<sup>140</sup>

In Hungarian domestic policy, the national policy towards foreign Hungarians has formed one of the pillars of Hungarian foreign policy and has been a permanent part of the domestic political struggle.<sup>141</sup> The story beginning with J. Antal, who claimed to be the prime minister of 15 million Hungarians, found its capable successors. A significant breakthrough in the policy towards foreign Hungarians was the adoption of the Act on Hungarians Living in Neighbouring States by the Hungarian Parliament on 19 June 2001. It was supported by 92 % of MP. In addition to representatives of the then governing coalition led by Fidesz and Prime Minister V. Orbán, he was also supported by opposition socialists. In Slovakia, 12 central and district offices and 14 branches were established to implement the law. From 1 January 2002 to 2 August 2004, 90,085 compatriot certificates were issued in Slovakia, for 16 % of the Hungarian population in Slovakia, according to the Hungarian data. Certificate holders were able to obtain benefits in Hungary in the areas of science, education, culture,

138 The analysis of the political system of Slovakia and Hungary in terms of historical assumptions and the historical context of Central European politics, various lines of policy until 2004, including the national line is elaborated in the work: HLOUŠEK, V. – KOPEČEK, L. *Konfliktní demokracie. Moderní masová politika ve střední Evropě*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2004.

139 Paul Lendvai said of Orbán: *"Orbán is endowed with exceptional political talent and even more exceptional talent for power."* *Pravda*, 22. 5. 2012, Orbán vyhral prvý polčas 10: 0, rozhovor I. Drábeka s P. Lendvaiom. J. Berényi, the chairman of the SMK, did not hide his admiration for V. Orbán. In 2012, he said of him: *"he is a revolutionary and often gets ahead of his time, opens up topics, and is thus perceived as a controversial politician."* (*Denník N*, 10. 3. 2015, Kern, M. SMK sa vracia, s Orbánom po boku).

140 *Sme*, 7. 1. 2012, Hrozí nám stret dvoch alfa samcov (rozhovor M. Piška s psychiatrom P. Hunčíkom).

141 SÁPOS, A. – SZERENCSES, J. Charakteristické črty národnostnej politiky súčasnej maďarskej vlády. In ŠUTAJOVÁ, J. – ĐURKOVSKÁ, M. (eds.). *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku v procese transformácie po roku 1989: (Historické, politologické a právne súvislosti)*. Prešov: Universum, 2007, p. 15-20.

social security, job opportunities, healthcare, transport. Slovakia and Romania criticized the law mainly for its extraterritorial scope and interference with the rights and authority of these states. Both Slovakia and Hungary turned to the Venice Commission<sup>142</sup> which criticized its extraterritorial validity in a decision of 19 October 2001, as did the OSCE and the European Commission. “A State may legitimately issue laws or regulations concerning nationals of foreign states without first seeking the consent of the State whose nationality it concerns, provided that the effects of such laws or regulations occur only within its borders.” The provisions of Hungarian law provided for the possibility of direct financial support for families and children attending schools with Hungarian language of instruction, presupposed the activities of non-governmental organizations in publishing the so-called compatriot certificates in the territory of foreign states.<sup>143</sup> The Venice Commission further pointed out that similar laws should respect the principle of friendly relations between states and recommended that Hungary seek a mutually acceptable compromise with Romania and Slovakia.<sup>144</sup> In February 2002, the National Council of the Slovak Republic declared that it did not agree with the effectiveness of the Hungarian law in Slovakia. The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities also criticised it. In the opinion of the Slovak government, the Hungarian law amended in June 2003 did not remove the neighbours’ reservations, and Slovakia insisted on the law not being applied on Slovak territory. The result of the bilateral negotiations was the Agreement between the Governments of the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Hungary on Mutual Support for National Minorities in the Field of Education and Culture, under the auspices of the Mixed Slovak-Hungarian Commission for Minorities.<sup>145</sup> The Government of the Slovak Re-

142 Venice Commission (The European Commission for Democracy through Law) was established on 10 May 1990. The Commission is an expert body of the Council of Europe, composed of internationally recognized experts with experience in democratic institutions and contributing to the development of law and political science. The Slovak Republic has joined the commission since 1993, where it was represented by J. Kľučka, and from 2007-2019 by I. Mačejková. The opinions of the commission were accepted in the SR e.g. in the preparation of the law on the languages of national minorities in 1999, and in the amendment of the language law in 2011. The Venice Commission also drafted an opinion on the Hungarian Compatriots Act of 2001, the Citizenship Act of 2010 and the new Hungarian Constitution of 2011. (Opinions of the Venice Commission are published on the website <http://www.venice.coe.int>.)

143 SÁPOSOVÁ Z. – ŠUTAJ Š. *Starostlivosť o krajanov v zahraničí...*

144 More detail on the law: GABZDILOVÁ, S. – SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. *Maďarský krajanový zákon*. In ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.) *Národ a národnosti Slovensku v transformujúcej spoločnosti – vzťahy a konflikty*. Prešov: Universum, 2005, p. 141-150.

145 The Mixed Slovak-Hungarian Commission for Minority Affairs (Zmiešaná slovensko-maďarská komisia pre menšiny) was established on the basis of the Protocol between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary of 24 November 1998 as one of twelve commissions serving to assist in fulfilling the *Basic Agreement*. The members of the ZK were diplomats, ambassadors, representatives of state authorities with competence in minority affairs, representatives of national minorities or important personalities of public life. ZK had two co-chairs, one for each party. It was to meet annually, alternately in Slovakia and Hungary. The mechanism of the commission allowed the problems of the minority in the neighbouring country to be discussed, and the mother country

public approved the agreement on 11 December 2003. In addition to this “minority” agreement, a general agreement was signed on 16 January 2003 between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Hungary on cooperation in culture, education, sports and youth.

Year 2010 was a major milestone in the building of Hungarian national policy, V. Orbán became the Prime Minister and has remained in this position to the present day. This enabled him to carry out his visions of national policy without much opposition, with the help of his political party and people who supported this policy at home and among foreign Hungarians.

The foundation of Hungarian policy was the gradual formation of a *cross-border vision of the unity of the Hungarian nation* (it can also be called “transfrontal revision” in relation to Trianon), which is currently being implemented in Hungary by means of the gradual penetration of national policy across borders and the institutional interconnection of Hungarians in Hungary and abroad (in the Carpathian Basin).<sup>146</sup> We must note that the cross-border Hungarian national policy was not formed because of Slovakia, nor can we perceive it as a policy primarily aimed at Slovakia. Slovakia is its part, as a country in which a large Hungarian minority lives. The integrity of the Kingdom of Hungary (Historic Hungary) was replaced by the integrity (symbol) of Hungarianism (*magyarság*). This policy can be seen as a fundamental shift in the perception of the consequences of the division of Hungarians by the Treaty of Trianon into several states. It gives the “right” to the Hungarian political representation to intervene in all matters concerning Hungarians across borders. It does not call for a change of borders, but counts on a large Hungarian world “without borders”. It includes the thesis that it is not necessary to change the borders, because, in this conception, the border has changed from a geographical border to a mental one.

V. Orbán presented the vision of a national policy involving all Hungarians which, for various reasons and in various ways, was supported by a large part of the population of Hungary, as well as Hungarians from the neighbouring states. Defining Hungary’s responsibilities in the new Hungarian Constitution, supplemented by other lines of cross-border policy presented in this paper, was a partly realistic, partly romantic and partly visionary project. It counts the Hungarian nation as 15 million people and considers the government of Hungary to be the government of these 15 million Hungarians. The result is, for instance, also the fact that it should no longer be a policy

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had room to present its views and “protect its minority” in the neighbouring country. As a result of the negotiations, minutes were prepared jointly, containing resolutions for both parties or only one country.

146 The geographical term Carpathian Basin has become a political term since Hungarian politicians started using it to describe the territory of the former Kingdom of Hungary, where numerous Hungarian minorities live, and created the Forum of Hungarian deputies of the Carpathian Basin (KMKF). Slovak politicians even started denying the existence of the Carpathian Basin. However, the Carpathian Basin exists geographically, (KÓNYA, P. – MATLOVIČ, R. (eds.). *Obyvateľstvo Karpatskej kotliny I*. Prešov: Universum, 1997, 247 p.) but it is in the interest of Hungarian national policy that it exists territorially as part of European policy and politically.

towards minorities abroad, but a policy towards the citizens abroad, as confirmed by the Hungarian Citizenship Act. National policy has a strong opponent on Jobbik, and in the extreme political spectrum the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (*Hatvan-négy Vármegyei Ifjusági Mozgalom, HVIM*) argue that Europe needs to be forced to revise the Trianon Peace Treaty. Jobbik established party offices in neighbouring countries, first in Romania and then in Slovakia. MEP from Jobbik Cs. Szegedi said he did not want the unification of the nation across borders, but without borders.<sup>147</sup> In the surrounding states, however, the Hungarian project of cross-border policy is received with respect and distrust. Its greatest weakness is its extraterritoriality and the negative consequences for the internal stability of the surrounding states.

## Pillars of Hungarian National Policy

### Institutional frameworks

Hungarian national policy involves the effort to create the institutional background for the fulfilment of Hungarian national policy. The individual segments of this policy have gradually evolved. They developed into a system in which the term Carpathian Basin played an important role. Most of the institutions we will address in this part operated outside Slovakia, mostly initiated by Hungarian politics, in Budapest or within the framework of European politics. What they have in common, however, is that politicians representing the Hungarian minority from Slovakia also participated in them.

The vision of Hungarian national policy profiled after 1989, but especially after 2010, is based on three pillars, which significantly affect the life of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, and thus also the Slovak minority policy. These are: 1 institutional provision of national policy; 2 subsidy policy to support foreign Hungarians; 3 commemoration as a basic pillar of building a common historical memory.

The policy of a cross-border vision of the unity of the Hungarian nation (Hungarianism) is complemented by the policy of creating institutional ties between the mother state and Hungarians abroad. Hungarians abroad have become part of national policy, as evidenced by the exclusion of this policy from the competence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2010 and the creation of special structures that address this issue.<sup>148</sup>

147 *Sme*, 7. 6. 2010, Nechceme zmenu hraníc.

148 Institutional frameworks of this policy are elaborated in many works of Hungarian authors, these are also available in Slovak language, thanks to the project "Trends in the Development of Ethnic Relations in Slovakia (Comparative Research of Nationality Issues in 2004-2020)" and previous projects of the Institute of Social Sciences of the SAS. SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. National Policy of Hungarian Governments (based on selected aspects)... p. 88-108; BÁRDI, N. Národná politika Maďarska po roku 1989. In ZAHORÁN, Cs. – KOLLAI, I. – OTČENÁŠOVÁ, S. (eds.). *Neznámy sused. Dvadsať rokov Maďarska (1990 – 2010)*. Budapest – Bratislava: Terra Recognita Alapítvány – Vydavateľstvo Talentum, 2011, p. 145-175; GABZDILOVÁ, S. – SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. Maďarský krajanský zákon. In ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.). *Národ a národnosti Slovensku v transformujúcej spoločnosti – vzťahy a konflikty*. Prešov: Universum, 2005, p. 149, 141-151;

From a formal point of view, changes in the Hungarian Constitution became an important part of Hungarian national policy. The name of the state changed. Since January 2012, the name of the country is Hungary. The “Holy Crown” became a symbol of constitutional state continuity, and therefore the name republic was no longer essential. Hungarians abroad could also participate in commenting on the constitution. Also the SMK took part, proposing that the preamble of the Constitution should mention that minorities (abroad) are state-forming communities, that the protection of the use of minority languages should be stronger, and that the Constitution should also ensure the representation of foreign Hungarians in the Hungarian parliament. At the meeting of the Forum of Hungarian MP of the Carpathian Basin; Kárpát-medencei Magyar Képviselők Fóruma (KMKF) 11 March 2011, a new Constitution was negotiated, the SMK representatives proposed that the wording that Hungary “*feels responsible for the lives of Hungarians living outside Hungary*” should be changed to “*the Republic of Hungary takes responsibility for the lives of Hungarians living abroad.*” the SMK also suggested that the Republic of Hungary should consider issues concerning the rights of Hungarians living abroad and the institutional provision of their lives to be issues of international law. According to J. Berényi, the SMK’s proposal was important, as it is not possible to change the Constitution every day.<sup>149</sup> Indeed, the new Hungarian Constitution contains wording on Hungary’s responsibility for Hungarians living outside its territory. On the other hand, the SNS saw the new Hungarian constitution as a threat to peace, and its chairman, J. Slota, declared that developments in Hungary were leading to a war conflict in Central Europe.<sup>150</sup> The new Hungarian Constitution received a lot of criticism from domestic political opponents from the opposition, who refused to take part in it. Slovak diplomacy requested the opinions of domestic experts on the risks arising from the new Hungarian Constitution. At the request of the PA CE Monitoring Committee of 26 March 2011, the Venice Commission also issued an opinion on this Constitution in June 2011.<sup>151</sup> The opinion addressed a number of technical legal issues, shortcomings related to the enshrinement of human rights in international documents, but also commented on the “*vagueness*” of the term “*achievements of the historic constitution*”. The determination presented in the preamble to the Constitution “*to preserve the intellectual and spiritual unity of our nation torn in the storms of the last century*” and to bear “*Hungary’s responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living beyond its borders*” was described as problematic, as it “*could thwart inter-*

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TÖRZSÖK, E. *Paraszt az Orbán-politika sakkjáráján a nemzetpolitika* – Interjú Törzsök Erikával. <http://www.cacid.net/hu/taxonomy/term/31>; SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. *Fragments of the National Policy of Hungarian Governments with Respect to the Governments...*

149 *Webnoviny*, 10. 3. 2011 SMK dnes zavíta na Fórum poslancov Karpatskej kotliny, <https://www.dnes24.sk/smk-opat-zavita-na-forum-poslancov-karpatskej-kotliny-88299>

150 *Aktuality*, 19. 4. 2011. Maďarsko smeruje k vyvolaniu vojnového konfliktu. <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/185811/slota-madarsko-smeruje-k-vyvolaniu-vojnoveho-konfliktu/>

151 Opinion on the new Hungarian Constitution adopted. At 87<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting of the Commission 17. – 18. 6. 2011 in Venice. <https://www.ustavnysud.sk/documents/10182/992152/BK2.pdf/c8441d13-35d8-494c-aab2-f4b9308fa782>

*state relations and create interethnic tensions.*” They criticized the constitution for being written on behalf of the dominant ethnic group “*us, members of the Hungarian nation*” ignoring the other groups of citizens of the state. The Venice Commission described the use of the term “*responsibility*” as unfortunate, “... *it could lead to a conflict of competences between the Hungarian authorities and the authorities of the given country.*” In conclusion, the Venice Commission appreciated some changes in the Constitution and criticized the non-transparent manner of discussing and preparing the Constitution.<sup>152</sup>

The Constitution was the result of the development of Hungarian society, it reflected the development in Hungary after 1989 (internal unification of the nation, care for the Hungarians abroad, ensuring order). The aim was, among other things, to build the national unity of the population of Hungary, to secure, protect and strengthen the nation. The means and mechanisms for this goal were incorporated into the Constitution. The Constitution creates legislative possibilities for the application of these goals, referring in particular to the preamble entitled “*Nemzeti hitvallás*” (National Creed/National Faith) to the history of Hungary and the main historical milestones and ideas that contributed to the formation of the historical memory of contemporary Hungarian society.

From the point of view of the historian, the wording “*our nation has defended Europe in battles for centuries...*” deserves special attention. Hungary’s arguments at both peace conferences in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in Trianon in 1920 and in Paris in 1946 were based on similar formulations. At that time, these arguments emphasized the unfairness of the proposed territorial solutions and the fact that Hungary and the Hungarian nation, which had defended Europe for a thousand years against the invasions of Mongols (Tatars) or Turks, are given borders that left Hungarians outside the state and destroyed the thousand years of its integrity.

The numeral “*thousand*” itself also has a symbolic, mythological role in the constitutional text, it symbolizes antiquity, autochthony – regardless of the actual number of years that are written or talked about. The abovementioned tendencies of the current Hungarian politics under the leadership of V. Orbán, who is building the image of the protector of Hungarian national unity, also declare other formulations of “*faith*” and undoubtedly apply to all Hungarians, not only the ones living in Hungary.<sup>153</sup>

While citizenship is attached the attributes of security, order, justice, freedom, attributes such as culture, language, faith, past/history, education, they clearly belong to the category of nation.

152 Opinion on the new Hungarian Constitution adopted. At 87<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting of the Commission 17. – 18. 6. 2011 in Venice. <https://www.ustavnysud.sk/documents/10182/992152/BK2.pdf/c8441d13-35d8-494c-aab2-f4b9308fa782>; Head of the Constitutional Court of the SR Iveta Macejková was also member of the Venice Commission at that time.

153 “*we will preserve the intellectual and mental unity of our nation, which was fragmented during the storms of the last century*” ... “*we will preserve and protect our heritage, Hungarian culture, our unique language, the values created by people and given by nature in the Carpathian Basin.*”



Hungarian society is in the grip of its own history, as reflected in the proposed Constitution. By fundamentally rejecting the national socialist regime (Szálasi) and the communist regime, contemporary Hungarian society focuses its historical resources, historical consciousness and historical memory on the most historically significant periods of historical Hungary, which date back to the oldest Hungarian history.<sup>154</sup> Therefore, the return to and emphasis on old principles, the “Holy Crown”, the “historical constitution” are also typical of the Constitution.<sup>155</sup>

The new Hungarian Constitution clearly defines today’s Hungary as the successor of St. Stephen’s Hungary, without interrupting continuity. Hungary is not a successor (one of the successors), but a continuation of the traditions of the St. Stephen’s Crown and the Kingdom of Hungary.

The basic value on which the articles of the Constitution are based is the Hungarian nation, perceived as the community of all Hungarians and the definition of the state as the state of Hungarians, responsible for the fate of all Hungarians and respecting other nations and ethnic groups.

The idea of citizenship for all Hungarians abroad and the subsequent right to vote played an important role in the state national policy. The unity of the Hungarian nation and subsequently also the citizenship were linked to specific products of the institutional connection of the Hungarians abroad with the mother country.

The first attempt at such an institutional link is the **Hungarian Permanent Conference – Hungarian-Hungarian Summit (Magyar Állandó Értekezlet – MÁÉRT)**. It was established on 20 February 1999 as a discussion forum guaranteed by the Hungarian Parliament, where the elected representatives of the Hungarian Parliament and Government could address, consult and advise the Hungarians living outside Hungary on how to proceed in solving common problems of the position of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin. In 2004, the conference was interrupted by Prime Minister F. Gyurcsány and other forms of consultations with compatriots were sought. The return to proven schemes has proved to be a good foundation for intervention in Hungarian cross-border policy even after the 2010 reforms, and the organization resumed its activities. the SMK is also a member of the organization, their management or ambassadors are actively involved in the activities of the organization. The representatives of Most-Híd were not invited to the conferences.

MÁÉRT became a place for consultations, discussions, meetings, empowerment for common national goals and a place to criticize the policies of the countries where the Hungarian minorities lived. They met once a year to discuss the issues that concerned Hungarians abroad and that the Hungarian government needed to discuss and thus gain support for their policy. These were the matters of dual citizenship and the

154 “We respect the achievements of our historical constitution and the Holy Crown, which embodies the constitutional state continuity of Hungary.”

155 *Magyarország Alaptörvénye* (2011. április 25.). Basic Law of Hungary (25 April 2011.) [http://nemzetikonyvtar.kormany.hu/download/0/10/50000/szlov%C3%A1k-magyar\\_nyomdai.pdf](http://nemzetikonyvtar.kormany.hu/download/0/10/50000/szlov%C3%A1k-magyar_nyomdai.pdf)

reactions of neighbouring states to this Hungarian extraterritorial law. The most important representatives of Hungary always participated in the meeting.<sup>156</sup>

At the end of the meeting, the conference made a joint statement. President J. Áder had a speech at XIII. plenary session of MÁÉRT in November 2014, where he reminded that Hungarian citizens from other countries could also vote in the elections for the first time. In the joint statement, the participants stated that “*the new parliament is a national legislature representing the entire Hungarian nation, including the Hungarians living abroad.*”<sup>157</sup> Prime Minister V. Orbán praised the SMK’s results in the municipal elections and stated that “*the position of the political parties of Hungarian minorities in the countries of the Carpathian Basin has been strengthened*”.<sup>158</sup>

The XIV. MÁÉRT plenary conference in December 2015, with the participation of V. Orbán, dealt with the issue of migrants.<sup>159</sup>

At the XV. MÁÉRT meeting in 2016, V. Orbán stated that “*the greatest success of the past six years is the unification of the nation, which happened in cooperation with the Hungarians living abroad*”. V. Orbán openly stated that this policy was a solution to Trianon for him. “*One hundred years after the Trianon dictatorship, the individual parts of the Hungarian nation found each other and the Hungarian-Hungarian cooperation became an everyday affair.*” In the final declaration, conference participants called for Hungarians in Slovakia who received Hungarian citizenship not to lose their Slovak citizenship.<sup>160</sup>

At the XVI. MÁÉRT meeting, V. Orbán emphasized the aim “*that every foreign Hungarian who wants to become an institutional member of the Hungarian national community could do so.*” According to him, a new stage in Hungarian-Hungarian relations began. While the previous years were the years of unification of the Hungarian nation beyond the borders, the next years are to be years of building the nation. “*The future of the Carpathian Basin is written in Hungarian.*” Orbán described the Carpathian Basin “*as a space for the fulfilment of the Hungarian nation and its culture*”.<sup>161</sup> At the XVII. MÁÉRT meeting in Budapest in November 2018, V. Orbán expressed his conviction that the Central Europe and specifically “*the whole area of the Carpathian Basin*” will be the engine of Europe in the upcoming period.<sup>162</sup>

156 *Hospodárske noviny*, 25. 11. 2011, Klusová, N. Orbán útočí na náš zákon.

157 *Teraz*, 21. 11. 2014, Neexistuje kolektívna vina a vinný národ, existujú iba vinní politici.

158 *Teraz*, 20. 11. 2014, Orbán prosí spojencov o pomoc pri presadzovaní maďarských záujmov

159 *Aktuality*, 3. 12. 2015, Po Slovensku podá žalobu pre povinné kvóty aj Maďarsko, <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/309436/po-slovensku-poda-zalobu-pre-rozhodnutie-o-povinnych-kvotach-aj-madarsko/>

160 *Aktuality*, 1. 12. 2016, Orbán: Úspechom uplynulých šiestich rokov je zjednotenie národa.

161 *Teraz*, 10. 11. 2017 (TASR). V otázkach občianstva, volebného práva a autonómie je konsenzus. <http://www.teraz.sk/zahranicie/orban-v-otazkach-obcianstva-volebneho-pr/291642-clanok.html>

162 *Teraz*, 16. 11. 2018. Orbán na maďarskom summite <http://www.teraz.sk/zahranicie/orban-na-summite-sila-regionu-strednej/361630-clanok.html>

**The Hungarian Parliamentary Committee for National Cooperation (Nemzeti Összetartozás Bizottsága).** The Committee of the Hungarian Parliament was established on 15 February 2010. In addition to the Fidesz MP, many members of the opposition also voted in favour of its establishment. The Committee deals with the national policy and issues of foreign Hungarians. Its goal is to maintain contacts with political and social organizations of foreign Hungarians. It also oversees the operation of the Gábor Bethlen Foundation, Hungary's most important institution for financial support of compatriots. Since April 2012, it has also included a subcommittee on autonomy. The Committee's meeting in Komárno in 2012 raised particular concerns was.<sup>163</sup> According to the Chairman of the Committee, Á. Potapi, they have not had any problems with meetings in other countries. According to him, they had planned a meeting in "Felvidék" for a long time, but they wanted to wait for the parliamentary elections.<sup>164</sup> The meeting took place on the premises of J. Selye University, on the campus. This was also criticized by I. Matovič (OLaNO) "*It is appropriate to ask whether this school aims to provide quality education or its goal is to spread the nostalgia for the great Kingdom of Hungary.*" However, the rector of the school J. Tóth claimed that the MP rented the premises of the school.<sup>165</sup> The meeting was not announced according to diplomatic practice at the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it was considered unusual and politically rude. In the past, the ministries agreed on principles for the preparation of reciprocal visits by constitutional officials, including those where bilateral negotiations are not anticipated and, in all cases, providing information on the conduct of the visit in advance is expected.<sup>166</sup> The Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Hungarian Ambassador Cs. Balogh to explain the situation.<sup>167</sup>

The meeting was also attended by RHS representative G. Tokár, the SMK chairman J. Berényi, who gave a presentation on the life (and future) of Hungarians in "Felvidék". M. Duray and P. Csáky also participated.<sup>168</sup> The meeting of the committee was public. Gy. Csóti, a member of the committee, expressed the belief that the negative trends in the demographic development of Hungarians in Slovakia can only be thwarted by the application of the right to self-determination, to autonomy. "*This must be won and this can only be achieved through the cooperation of the Hun-*

163 More detailed information about the Committee available at: <https://www.parlament.hu/web/nemzeti-osszetartozas-bizottsaga/elnoki-koszonto> This was the third outreach meeting of the Committee in one of the neighbouring countries. In the spring of 2011, the Committee met in Berehovo, Ukraine, and in summer 2011 in Lendava, Slovenia.

164 *Pravda*, 27. 6. 2012, Maďarskí poslanci provokujú v Komárne.

165 *Hospodárske noviny*, 27. 6. 2012, Spor s Maďarmi ide do Európy.

166 Probably after the experience with the "private" visit of president I. Solyom, who was not allowed to enter the territory of Slovakia in 2009, where he wanted to participate in the unveiling of the statue of St. Stephen, the first Hungarian king.

167 *Pravda*, 4. 7. 2012, Maďarský veľvyslanec počul kritiku.

168 *Pravda*, 27. 6. 2012, Maďarskí poslanci provokujú v Komárne; *Hospodárske noviny*, 27. 6. 2012, Spor s Maďarmi ide do Európy; *Pravda*, 4. 7. 2012, Maďarský veľvyslanec počul kritiku; *Hospodárske noviny*, 27. 6. 2012, V Komárne zasadnú Maďari.

garians in the entire Carpathian Basin.”<sup>169</sup> The chairman of Most-Híd, Béla Bugár, had reservations about the Committee’s meeting in Slovakia. Not because he would oppose such a meeting on the territory of Slovakia, but due to compliance with the standard of diplomatic relations. The chairman of Most-Híd, Béla Bugár, had reservations about the Committee’s meeting in Slovakia. Not because he would oppose such a meeting on the territory of Slovakia, but due to compliance with the standard of diplomatic relations. “Nevertheless, when the Committee is coming here, they should have informed, for example, the Slovak Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and Minorities. They could have invited the Chairman of the Committee, Rudolf Chmel, who was the Deputy Prime Minister for Minorities, or inform someone from the Government, to let them know that nothing that would offend the Slovak Republic was happening”<sup>170</sup> It is necessary to remind that this incident happened during the government of I. Radičová. One of the executives of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Government for Minority Affairs K. Petőcz criticized this meeting, “a formal meeting of the National Assembly Committee of the Republic of Hungary in another state without proper notification to the competent state authorities, moreover at the premises of a state university, is definitely not in compliance with standard diplomatic practice. ... what is more, when the Slovak side had made it clear several times before that they do not want unannounced visits?”<sup>171</sup>

However, in the interest of calming relations, he added, “although nothing that dramatic happened anyway,” he downplayed the arbitrariness, the disruption of good neighbourly relations. The problem of Slovak-Hungarian relations is that it is difficult to determine what is and what only will be dramatic in Slovak-Hungarian relations.

After the presentations, the members of the Committee stopped at the statue of St. Stephen in Komárno, laid a wreath at the monument to the Hungarians displaced from Slovakia after the Second World War in Dvory nad Žitavou, in the evening they met with Hungarian civic associations in Dolné Saliby.<sup>172</sup>

In any case, there was no next meeting of this Committee in Slovakia.

Hungarian policy created direct ties with the elites in neighbouring countries and creates conditions for a representative forum of these elites. Unlike the Standing Conference (MÁÉRT), which is a discussion forum for Hungarian elites, the **Kárpát-medencei Magyar Képviselek Fóruma (KMKF), the Forum of Hungarian MP of the Carpathian Basin** is a forum for MP.<sup>173</sup> Participation in its activities is limited by the mandates obtained by the MP of Hungarian nationality in national parliaments, in the EP or in local governments in the countries neighbouring Hungary in which they live, including Slovakia. The forum was established in September 2003 and the MP meet

169 *Sme*, 28. 6. 2012, Maďari ďakovali Paškovi.

170 *Pravda*, 27. 6. 2012, Maďarskí poslanci provokujú v Komárne.

171 *Sme*, 30. 6. 2012, Petőcz, K. Hranice suverenity a národná politika.

172 *Sme*, 28. 6. 2012, Maďari ďakovali Paškovi.

173 ŠUTAJ, Š. – SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. Maďarská menšina v politickom živote na Slovensku (na príklade roku 2008) II. (činnosť inštitúcií). In *Človek a spoločnosť*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2009.

once a year.<sup>174</sup> Gradually, the internal ties in this body were strengthened. The transformation of the KMKF into a permanent institution of the Hungarian Parliament, financed from its budget, was carried out by the resolution of the Hungarian Parliament of 3 March 2008. The KMKF is headed by the Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament. The Hungarian Government is obliged to inform the KMKF about the government's steps in the national policy, i.e. the policy towards Hungarian minorities abroad. The Statute of the KMKF states: *"The program includes issues of strategic, principled nature .... an important activity is ... the formulation of national political positions that guide the policy of Hungarians abroad and Hungary's foreign policy."*<sup>175</sup>

From the outset, the activities of the KMKF in Slovakia were closely monitored and after its transformation into an institution of the Hungarian Parliament and the participation of the SMK in the KMKF meeting on 12 – 13 September 2008, the National Council of the Slovak Republic expressed a "deep concern" over the fact that the KMKF has become part of the Hungarian Parliament *"as a result of which there are well-founded concerns that the Hungarian Parliament's resolution inadmissibly interferes in the affairs of the sovereign Slovak Republic, which is in sharp contrast to the values and principles of the European Union."*<sup>176</sup>

On 23 May 2009, the chairman of the then opposition party Fidesz V. Orbán, also called for the creation of a unified platform of MEP from the Carpathian Basin after a joint meeting with the SMK chairman P. Csáky in Esztergom. In Slovakia, the government MP (Smer-SD, the SNS, the HZDS) initiated an extraordinary meeting of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.<sup>177</sup> Opposition parties (the KDH and the SDKÚ-DS) boycotted the meeting on 3 June 2009 because they saw it as an abuse of constitutional ground for a political campaign before the European elections. SDKÚ chairman M. Dzurinda, however, said that V. Orbán's statements were detrimental to good neighbourly relations. They harm and produce nationalism. At the meeting, he called on the SMK representatives not to let themselves be used by representatives of other countries and to realize their responsibility towards the Slovak Republic. Other government MP also drew attention to the extraterritoriality of the activities of the Hungarian institutions.<sup>178</sup>

In September 2009, the problem with the participation of the SMK MP in the KMKF reappeared. According to the Prime Minister R. Fico, the forum is dangerous

174 *Aktuálne*, 6. 12. 2013, Fórum maďarských poslancov považuje novelu slovenského školského zákona za neprijateľnú, <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/forum-madarskych-poslancov-povazuje-novelu-slovenskeho-skolskeho-zakona-za-neprijatelnu/zahranicie/europa/>

175 [https://archiv.vlada.gov.sk/old.uv/12600/informacia-o-vztahoch-a-moznych-negativnych-dopadoch-institucionalizacie-fora-madarskych-poslancov-karpatskej-kotliny-\(fmpkk\)-pri-madarskom-parlamente-na-politicky-a-spolocensky-vyvoj-strednej-eurovy8617.html?day=2011-10-01&art\\_datum\\_od=&art\\_datum\\_do=](https://archiv.vlada.gov.sk/old.uv/12600/informacia-o-vztahoch-a-moznych-negativnych-dopadoch-institucionalizacie-fora-madarskych-poslancov-karpatskej-kotliny-(fmpkk)-pri-madarskom-parlamente-na-politicky-a-spolocensky-vyvoj-strednej-eurovy8617.html?day=2011-10-01&art_datum_od=&art_datum_do=)

176 The resolution of the NC of the SR of 4 November 2008, <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=291875>; all 20 MP of the SMK voted against this resolution, KDH MP mostly abstained from the vote and SDKÚ-DS were not present at the vote.

177 *Aktuálne*, 1. 7. 2009, Pre Orbána zasadne slovenský parlament.

178 *Aktuálne*, 3. 6. 2009, Slotá: Zakážme Orbánovi vstup na Slovensko; *Pravda*, 4. 6. 2009, Čaplovič, D. Kauza Orbán: Nebezpečné prebúdzanie.

because it brings together Hungarian MP from the national parliaments of the countries that once formed Greater Hungary. In STV, he asked why the Hungarians who are MP in the USA or England do not sit in that Forum. Both the SNS and the HZDS demanded that the SMK MP lose their seats due to participation in the Subcarpathian forum.<sup>179</sup>

Even after the inauguration of I. Radičová's government, the issue of KMKF's did not fade into the background. However, unlike the coalition of the first Fico's government, the attempt to create a front line of parliamentary representation of the Hungarian MP of the Carpathian Basin was to be addressed by discussion. The Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic F. Šebej from OKS saw the possibility of an agreement. "*Undoubtedly, we will find common ground in such topics as well,*" he said in the company of the Hungarian partner M. Balla from Fidesz. Unlike in the past, foreign committees did not argue about the KMKF. This irritated the former governing coalition of Smer, the SNS and the HZDS so much that they adopted a critical resolution in the Parliament.<sup>180</sup> Foreign Minister M. Dzurinda expressed his optimistic belief that he would, "for the sake of good", agree with the Hungarian partners that the KMKF would not be a permanent institution of the Hungarian parliament.<sup>181</sup> However, Hungarian national policy was adamant in this matter and Slovak proposals to change the status of the KMKF were not accepted. KMKF meetings were held in the following period, irregularly, mostly once a year.<sup>182</sup>

The KMKF mostly dealt with issues that are important for individual groups of Hungarians abroad. In December 2013, for instance, the participants of the plenary session referred to the amendment to the Slovak Education Act, approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in December 2013, as unacceptable, as it may cause the cancelation of a number of schools with the Hungarian language of instruction. In the final document from the session, the KMKF called on the Hungarian government to open the issues of dual citizenship and the issue of Beneš's decrees in the Slovak-Hungarian negotiations. The KMKF participants appreciated that after the November regional elections, the participation of the Hungarian minority in regional bodies increased, as well as the fact that the SMK would nominate a candidate for the Slovak presidential election. The forum welcomed the expansion of the "*Hungarian political nation*" by 500,000 foreign Hungarians who took the civic oath after accepting Hungarian citizenship. They expressed the belief that the participation of Hungarian citizens living abroad in the 2014 parliamentary elections in Hungary will be "*the completion of the institutional unification of Hungary*". They expressed the hope that after the elections to the European Parliament in 2014, the Hungarian parties in

179 *Hospodárske noviny*, 14. 9. 2009, Sólyom pozvánku zahodil.

180 *Pravda*, 1. 10. 2010, Lipšicova novela o občianstve je pre Most neprijateľná.

181 *Plus jeden deň*, 31. 7. 2010, Fórum poslancov maďarskej kotliny, <https://www1.pluska.sk/spravy/z-domova/dzurinda-forum-poslancov-karpatskej-kotliny-poriesim>

182 Since 2011 they were held on: 11. 3. 2011, 15. 2. 2013, 6.12.2013, 5. 12. 2014, 1, 4. 2016, 24. 3. 2017, 9. 2. 2018, 8. 3. 2019). <https://www.parlament.hu/web/guest/allasfoglalasok>

Slovakia and Romania would maintain or strengthen their participation in the EP. The KMKF praised the march of the Székelys for autonomy of the Hungarians in Romania. Forum members described the march for the autonomy as an “*exemplary means of direct democracy*”.<sup>183</sup>

At one of the following meetings of the KMKF on 24 March 2017, the Minister of Foreign Affairs P. Szijjártó and the Speaker of the Parliament L. Kövér gave speeches. The nation-states should protect not only the majority living in the nation-states, but also the “*national minorities*” in the Carpathian Basin, because only “*can they protect the interests of their citizens against global economic, financial or social interests.*” The Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Economic Relations emphasized the need for cooperation and dialogue, joint solutions with neighbouring countries. They focused on the defence of national interests and ethnic minorities in the Carpathian Arc and the threats of globalization for ethnic communities, as well as the policies of Russia and the United States.<sup>184</sup>

In February 2018, at the opening of the KMKF plenary session, the Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, L. Kövér, said that “*Hungarians have no reason to celebrate one hundred years from 1918 ... But we have no reason not to honour those who celebrate the establishment of their nation-state. Especially if they respect the right of Hungarians to be able to express their feelings in this regard in a dignified manner...*”.<sup>185</sup> Kövér reminded that just like the period of anti-national communism was finished from the political point of view in 1990, in 2010 (with the accession of the second government of V. Orbán) it was possible to close the period of the first two decades of the post-communist era, burdened by disputes and uncertainty, in a democratic way.<sup>186</sup>

Even at the beginning of the KMKF plenary session in 2019, the Minister of Foreign Affairs P. Szijjártó stated: “*Hungary will protect the rights of Hungarian communities abroad ... The position of Hungary’s foreign policy is that we will not sacrifice the interests of Hungarian communities on any altar of geopolitical interests, despite various pressures.*”<sup>187</sup>

The possibility of transforming the KMKF into a special chamber of the Hungarian Parliament was debated behind-the-scenes, but this intention has not yet been implemented.

183 *Aktuálne*, 6. 12. 2013, Fórum maďarských poslancov považuje novelu slovenského školského zákona za neprijateľnú, <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/forum-madarskych-poslancov-povazuje-novelu-slovenskeho-skolskeho-zakona-za-neprijatelnu/zahranicie/europa/>

184 *Teraz*, 24. 3. 2017, Kövér: Úlohu národných štátov chcú prebrať globálne záujmové skupiny, <http://www.teraz.sk/zahranicie/kover-ulohu-narodnych-statov-v-e/250826-clanok.html>

185 *Teraz*, 9. 2. 2018, Maďari nemajú dôvod oslavovať storočnicu... <http://www.teraz.sk/zahranicie/kover-madari-nemaju-dovod-oslavova/307638-clanok.html>

186 *Parlamentné listy*, 9. 2. 2018, Maďari nemajú dôvod oslavovať. <https://www.parlamentnelisty.sk/arena/monitor/Madari-nemaju-dovod-oslavovat-storocnicu-udalosti-roku-1918-tvrdi-pred-seda-madarskeho-parlamentu-297738>

187 *Teraz*, 8. 3. 2019, Minister zahraničných vecí a ekonomických vzťahov Maďarom žijúcim vo svete..., <https://www.teraz.sk/spravy/szijarto-madarsko-neobetuje-prava/382568-clanok.html>

In the KMKF section on the website of the Hungarian Parliament, Slovakia is currently presented under the pseudonym “Felvidék” and it is represented by the “MP” of the SMK from regional self-governments J. Menyhárt; P. Óry; J. Berényi; G. Németh; Gy. Bárdos; I. Kőrösi and former MEP P. Csáky. The President of the Alliance for Common Goals M. Duray is an honorary member.<sup>188</sup>

The Hungarian Diaspora Council, which is a common forum of Hungarians living in the world, was also established. The World Congress of Hungarians is an organization whose tradition dates back to the interwar period. We will not deal with these organizations, as well as with many others that try to unite Hungarians scattered around the world, because they do not have a direct influence on the Slovak nationality policy.

Activities in the European institutions deserve special attention, but, unfortunately, we do not have enough space to address these. The aim of Hungarian foreign policy was also to unify the activities of MP of Hungarian nationality elected in the countries where they live. V. Orbán and his political enclave called on Hungarians to elect members of Hungarian nationality in order to increase the representation of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin in the European Parliament. To a certain extent, it was based on real political practice, as the SMK coordinated their activities very closely with the Hungarian MP representing Fidesz in the European Parliament.<sup>189</sup>

### Subsidy Policy

Subsidy policy is an important part of the Hungarian government policy and the formation of relations with Hungarians abroad. The Hungarians of the Carpathian Basin receive funds for the school, cultural, sports and political activities for a whole range of population groups, from youth to pensioners, for civic associations and political parties, all from the Hungarian state budget. In her latest work, Zlatica Sáposová analytically evaluated Hungary’s subsidy policy for Hungarians abroad,<sup>190</sup> therefore we will only illustrate the significant facts that characterize this policy. Care for compatriots living abroad is enshrined in the highest legislative standards not only in Hungary, but also in Slovakia.<sup>191</sup> However, subsidies for Slovaks in Hungary are minimal compared to subsidies for Hungarians in Slovakia. Moreover, Slovaks do not have a special position in Hungary in the whole system administered by the Office for Foreign Slovaks, such as for instance the Hungarians from the “Carpathian Basin”, and due to their numbers, they are “lost” in the subsidy system.<sup>192</sup>

188 <https://www.parlament.hu/web/guest/tagok1>

189 *Pravda*, 1. 6. 2009, Daniš, D. Maďarskú kartu nevytiahol Fico, ale Orbán.

190 SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. Fragments of the National Policy of Hungarian Governments...

191 More detail e.g. SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. – ŠUTAJ, Š. *Starostlivosť...*

192 More detail: HOMIŠINOVÁ, M. Jazykovo - komunikačné správanie pracovníkov slovenských menšinových samospráv v Maďarsku. In *Sociálne a politické analýzy*, 2007, Vol. 1. No. 1, p. 102-135; RAJŇÁKOVÁ, K. Participácia menšín na územnej samospráve Maďarskej republiky. In *Sociálne a politické analýzy*, 2008, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 16-38; SIK, E. – ÖRKÉNY, A. Slovaks in Hungary. In *Slovenská politologická revue*, 2011, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 211-228; KMEŤ,



For introduction we will use a translation by Z. Sáposová from an interview with V. Orbán, published by the Romanian daily *Krónika*, in which he described the economic context of his cabinet's national policy: *"We promote a national policy that is in line with the fact that being a Hungarian is not only uplifting, but also rewarding; not only for the most educated, but to make it worthwhile for every Hungarian to be Hungarian. ... The home country is now able to support economic development programs, similar to those at home in every territory across borders, which will allow everyone to move forward. These will reach the Lower Land (Délvidek) and Transcarpathia (Kárpátalja) in Transylvania, we are only starting in the Upper Land (Felvidék). We agreed with the Slovaks on how this could be implemented so that they could support it too. One of the great results in the coming years will be that the Hungarians will survive: that just because they are Hungarians, they have more opportunities for development, employment, income and education than they had before. Therefore, it will be advantageous for a Hungarian living in the last village, in the last house, to remain Hungarian."*<sup>193</sup>

National policy is thus accompanied by a generous financial subsidy policy through various types of funds supporting Hungarians in Slovakia too. According to the Deputy Prime Minister of Hungary Zs. Semjen at the Parliamentary Committee of the Hungarian Parliament for National Cooperation, the subsidy increased from HUF 9 million (€ 28,917) in 2009 to HUF 89 billion (€ 285,953,000) in 2016.<sup>194</sup> As already mentioned, the subsidy system and the possibility to contribute to various minority activities in Slovakia was regulated by the 2003 agreement, resulting from the *Basic Agreement*. In the 1990s, during the Mečiar-Slota representations, the Slovak government policy demanded control rights to monitor subsidies. Other governments created a basis (through a signed agreement) for an unrestricted and uncontrollable flow of funds from Hungary and renounced effective monitoring of these funds. Rather, they called on the civic sector to make "order" in Hungarian subsidies.<sup>195</sup>

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M. *Krátké dejiny dolnozemsých Slovákov*. Nadľak: Vydavateľstvo Ivan Krasko, 2012, 383 s; *Verejná správa*, 2009, No. 4, rozhovor so slovenským veľvyslancom v Budapešti Jurajom Mišašom.

193 *Orbán Viktor interjúja a Krónika című romániai napilapnak*. <https://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-interjuja-a-kronika-cimu-romaniai-napilapnak> [cit. 22. 1. 2020.] In SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. *Fragments of the National Policy of Hungarian Governments...*

194 *Aktuality*, 9. 5. 2017, *Maďarské občianstvo v zjednodušenom režime...*, <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/486376/madarske-obcianstvo-v-zjednodusenom-rezime-udelili-takmer-milionu-ziadatelov/>

195 When asked how he perceives that the government of V. Orbán in Slovakia directly supports students who attend Hungarian schools, reconstruction of historic buildings, finances Slovak football clubs or the participation of Hungarians in the Slovak hockey league, G. Gál, a representative of Most-Híd, already as the Minister of Justice replied: *"Until I became a minister..., I used to say: let's increase money for such support, let's support grammar schools, cultural organizations. Each country must take care of their compatriots abroad. ... I perceive such support positively, but on the other hand, it is necessary to address whether these funds are used effectively and how they are actually used. ... I have various information, also regarding*

At ZSMK (Mixed Slovak-Hungarian Commission) meetings, the issue of financing the activities of Hungarians in Slovakia by Hungary is a permanently open issue and the subject of dispute. The result is a state of quiet tolerance of Hungarian subsidy policy and, at the same time, complete ignorance of what funds come from Hungary and for what purposes they are used.

However, the expected subsidy of the Hungarian minority by the mother country was also reflected in the Slovak subsidy system for the culture of national minorities, which introduced the item whether the minority has a home country into the mathematical formula for calculating the subsidy. This actually meant that it was up to the home country what form and amount of support it would provide for the minority. Hungary's subsidy policy was observed with apprehension, as it strengthened Hungary's influence on Slovak citizens of Hungarian nationality. Nevertheless, the Hungarian subsidy system came in handy for Slovak political representations. It compensated for the deficiencies of the Slovak subsidy minority policy and brought new financial incentives to neglected regions, supported the educational and cultural infrastructure. Without financial subsidies from Hungary, the establishment and operation of the relatively independent institutions such as the Forum Institute for Minority Research, J. Selye University in Komárno, or football stadiums in Dunajská Streda, Šamorín, Komárno would be inconceivable.

In Slovakia, there was no institution with Hungarian membership that would not support such a subsidy policy, as it expanded the possibilities of using financial resources for the activities of members of the Hungarian minority. On 16 July 2010, RHS also issued a statement that *"as a representative forum of the institutional system of Hungarians in Slovakia, it agrees for an open, transparent system of providing subsidies for foreign Hungarians based on a unified strategy, public consensus and involvement of all stakeholders to be established in Hungary; a system that would exclude any clientelism and that would take into account the interests and requirements of Hungarian organizations and institutions in Slovakia."*<sup>196</sup> At the same time, however, it adopted critical opinions and comments on the decisions and allocations of the *Szülőföld Alap Fund* (the Homeland Fund) subsidies, by means of which the Hungarian Government provided funding at that time. They demanded that the third sector and *"the whole minority system in Slovakia ... the whole Hungarian community and also their political elites"* be involved in the allocation of funds. As it later turned out, the naïve optimism of RHS that the Hungarian government would allow them to oversee state subsidies soon hit the wall of political realism. As the goal of the Hungarian governments, neither at that time nor later, was not to support third

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*the media space, how some circles are trying to dominate this sector politically. How only the "right" civic associations are supported. However, the Hungarians themselves should be interested in this, these are also their taxes. ... Hungarian community in Slovakia must also clean up. They should ask where and why the money is going."* (Dennik N, 9. 7. 2018, Vyberať ústavných sudcov 90 hlasmi je sabotáž (rozhovor V. Prušovej s G. Gálom).

196 <http://www.kerekasztal.org/sk/2010/07/stanovisko-okruhleho-stola-madarov-na-slovensku-k-dotaciam-pre-zahranicnych-madarov/>

sector activities without a clear focus on political objectives, transnational policy and without subordination to the donor. And thus the amiable challenge, which got lost in time, ended with the statement *“We believe that clientelism and behind-the-scenes politics can only be effectively fought with the involvement of all institutions and the public. The Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia is ready to discuss this with the competent Hungarian government authorities.”*<sup>197</sup>

Hungarian subsidy policy became the subject of conflicts also between political parties in Slovakia. P. Csáky and the Hungarian representations counted on the support of the Hungarian government, considering it a legitimate tool for intervening in the Slovak school and cultural state policy. Later developments confirmed this trend, however, during the government of Smer, the SNS, the HZDS coalition, such views were perceived as a tool of extreme revisionism of the Hungarian minority and disloyalty of its political representations. On 1 September 2007, P. Csáky organized a meeting of representatives of Hungarian minorities in Europe in Štúrovo to discuss the situation following the accession of several countries to the Schengen area. The subject of the debate was to be the situation of Hungarians in Serbia, Romania and Ukraine, who found themselves outside this area, but also the opinion on the Hungarian Parliament’s deliberations on the so-called national priorities and strategies, as well as the support system that the Hungarian government applies to Hungarian communities abroad.

It was a period when the strategy of Hungarian policy towards the creation of institutional and functional provision of Hungary’s policy towards compatriots beyond the border was gradually formed and manifested itself in a later period (citizenship, constitutional change, grant system to support foreign Hungarians ...). Therein, the Hungarian minority political representation also saw a legitimate space to influence the formation of this policy. Csáky announced that they would like to make adjustments in the Hungarian Government’s support system due to demographic changes (census results): *“We would like to change some elements of this support. We would like to extend the current support for students of schools with the Hungarian language of instruction or for students of Slovak nationality who study Hungarology or Hungarian language, to the after-school area, as well as preschools.”*<sup>198</sup>

Most-Híd, created after 2009, was not included in the reallocation of funds flowing from Hungary as a “traitorous” and non-Hungarian party, they, therefore, criticised the ways how a competing party obtained money. This was illustrated by a Slovak publicist in connection with the support of HUF 200 million (€ 625 thousand) to *“raise the identity of Hungarian-speaking Roma”* and *“strengthen the position of local and regional products”* for the *Libertate* civic association, with the political background of the SMK. the SMK refused to enter the Slovak *“corruption cesspool”*, but it entered the *“Magna cesspool libertate”*.<sup>199</sup>

197 <http://www.kerekasztal.org/sk/2010/07/stanovisko-okruhleho-stola-madarov-na-slovensku-k-dotaciam-pre-zahranicnych-madarov/>

198 TASR, 28. 8. 2007, Stretnutie maďarských organizácií v Štúrove aj o Schengene.

199 Sme, 17. 2. 2017, Schutz, P. Reč besného psa a body pre Kazimíra.

After 2010, Orbán's cabinet reorganized the support policy (*támogatási politika*). The *Szülőföld Alap* (Homeland support fund), which was set up by Orbán's predecessors and replaced by the Bethlen Gábor Fund (*Bethlen Gábor Alap* – BGA), ceased to exist. The new fund provides support for culture, education, science, as well as specific subsidies for V. Orbán's cross-border "football empire" in the Carpathian Basin.<sup>200</sup> In 2018, HUF 5 billion (€ 16.5 million) from the Hungarian state budget was dedicated to finance medium-sized enterprises in the "Felvidék". Entrepreneurs from southern Slovakia could apply for a maximum of € 15,000 (they had to contribute 30 % by co-financing) in the subsidy scheme the "*Gábor Baross Plan*"<sup>201</sup>, directly at the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The SMK promoted this plan in their pre-election leaflets in southern Slovakia. The plan was drawn up by a group of Hungarian economists around the vice-chairman of the SMK I. Farkas, to elevate the economically backward districts inhabited by people of Hungarian nationality. The plan consisted of two parts, an analytical one, in which the authors argued a change in economic conditions in southern Slovakia; the second part of the plan focused on the development possibilities of the region and provided for large subsidies to these districts through development programs from Hungary. According to the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the entire scheme was to take place in accordance with the European Commission's regulation on state aid. However, Slovak Ministries of Economy and Agriculture did not know how this would work out in this case.<sup>202</sup> The evaluation of the grant scheme took place on 5 February 2017 as part of negotiations between the representatives of the SMK and the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs P. Szijjártó "*on cross-border Slovak-Hungarian cooperation in small business, culture and sport*". The President of the Republic Council of the SMK P. Öry emphasized that the amount of € 15 – 16 million will come to Slovakia as an investment incentive "*basically into the Slovak state budget*" and it will be a benefit "*for southern Slovakia, Hungary, for Hungarians living in Slovakia and the Slovak Republic*".<sup>203</sup> Subsequently, the development plan of Gábor Baross "*which helps to preserve our community, but also to keep it in our home country*" was also

200 SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. Fragments of the National Policy of Hungarian Governments...; Organizations representing foreign Hungarians did not get a place in the BGA leadership (as it was during previous governments). A nine-member committee was set up to make proposals for support. Zs. Semjén, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for national policy, nominated the former President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Sz. E. Vizi as the head of the committee. However, Zs. Semjén, A. Levente Gál, State Secretary for Public Administration and Zs. Répás, Deputy State Secretary for National Policy had the decisive authority.

201 The plan was named after a member of the parliament of the Kingdom of Hungary and the minister of the Hungarian governments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a native from Pružina.

202 *Plus 7 dní*, 18. 12. 2017, Žitná-Lučaiová, A. Milióny od Viktora..., <https://plus7dni.pluska.sk/Kauzy/Miliony-od-Viktora-Madarska-vlada-financuje-program-pre-slovenskych-podnikatelov-z-Felvideku>.

203 *Aktuálne*, 6. 2. 2018, Maďari pošlú na Slovensko milióny eur, <https://aktualne.atlas.sk/ekonomika/slovenska-ekonomika/madari-poslu-juzne-slovensko-miliony-eur-podporia-podnikatelov-kulturu-ci-skolstvo.html>

appreciated by the SMK Republican Council.<sup>204</sup> The exact data on the amount of financial support from Hungarian public sources for foreign organizations is very difficult to verify. The support system is not transparent. Financial support for foreign Hungarians over 10 years, from 2011 to 2020 has increased almost 50-fold. According to the National Policy Information System (*Nemzetpolitikai Informatikai Rendszer – NIR*), since 2011 the BGA has supported projects worth HUF 190 billion, i.e. € 590 million. However, much of the information on the financial support of Hungarians abroad is not disclosed (e.g. investments in real estate and the construction of football academies). Orbán’s cabinet plans to use HUF 92.8 billion (€ 290 million) to support foreign Hungarians in 2020. For comparison, Slovakia gives € 8 million to support the culture of all national minorities in Slovakia. However, there are other institutions of the Hungarian government through which cross-border organizations can apply for support. Foreign organizations have the opportunity to obtain support in the programs of the National Cultural Fund (*Nemzeti Kulturális Alap - NKA*), the Jenő Szász Research Institute of the National Strategy (*Szász Jenő Nemzetstratégiai Kutatóintézet – NSK*) or the lottery company Szerencsejáték Zrt.) owned by the Hungarian state. Good contacts and the activity of a “lobby” are particularly necessary to obtain support. The Ministerial Office (*Miniszterelnökség*) also decides on billions in support. State authorities decide on financial resources, independently and randomly. There is no control system to monitor the long-term effects of support programs, the sustainability of implemented projects (neither by the Hungarian state nor by the beneficiaries of Hungarian nationality).<sup>205</sup> Representatives of Hungarian elites abroad are aware of the populist nature of V. Orbán’s national policy, his use of minorities abroad to strengthen the clientelist nature of the financial position of people close to them. By creating a system of clientelism among foreign Hungarians through giving generous support, V. Orbán and his cabinet strengthened their position and the illusion of irreplaceability of the defenders of Hungarian identity, especially among nationalist voters. At the same time, however, clientelism and the support of selected political parties (e.g. the SMK versus Most-Híd) or organizations of Hungarian nationality provoke conflicts among Hungarians across borders, polarize Hungarian communities and thus weaken the protection of their interests.<sup>206</sup> B. Bugár, whose party was not included among the Hungarian parties by V. Orbán and did not receive subsidies, assessed Orbán’s subsidy policy as wasting the money of “*Hungarian taxpayers for his vassals*” and pointed out the lack of transparency in their allocation. He himself, as a Slovak citizen and taxpayer, expected an improvement in the situation of the Hungarian minority from the Slovak government.<sup>207</sup> The subsidy policy was linked to the SMK. In 2015, the SMK drew up a list of “*institutions of national importance*” and

204 Teraz, 24. 2. 2018, the SMK sa pripravuje na komunálne voľby; <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/smk-komunalne-volby/310485-clanok.html>

205 SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. Fragments of the National Policy of Hungarian Governments...

206 SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. Fragments of the National Policy of Hungarian Governments...

207 Teraz, 1. 9. 2018, Orbánova podpora zahraničných Maďarov je vyhadzovaním peňazí, <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/bugar-orbanova-podpora-zahranicnych/346137-clanok.html>

sent it to Budapest for approval, subsequently, subsidies in the amount of € 1.5 million were distributed through the SMK. J. Berényi described this system as transparent, the SMK politicians as objective and competent to decide on subsidies, and according to him, organizations can suggest “*who else they would like to see among themselves*”.<sup>208</sup>

Other hundreds of thousands of euros a year were received by the media closely linked to the SMK, such as the internet newspapers felvidék.ma, hírek.sk or korkép.sk. In 2017, they received half a billion forints (about € 1.6 million) directly from the Orbán government, officially for the development of local media. The SMK decided how it would distribute the money. A commission of experts was formally set to allocate the money.<sup>209</sup>

After the elections and Fidesz’s victory in 2018, the chairman of the SMK J. Menyhárt also praised the Hungarian subsidy policy and described it as good news for Hungarians in neighbouring countries as well. “*It was this government that put Hungary in order after 2010 and took care of Hungarian affairs abroad. Built preschools, the support of small businesses, our enriched culture are the proof of this.*” According to him, a strong mandate means that Hungarian society considers compatriots as their partners and that they can count on the support of the Hungarian government in the future. He told the daily *Új Szó* that Orbán was responsible for Hungary being represented in Europe and in world politics beyond its size and economic strength. “*Hungarians from Slovakia are interested in a strong Hungary and Fidesz can ensure that.*”<sup>210</sup>

At a scientific conference in Šamorín in 2018, in a discussion, P. Hunčík pointed out the effort to centralize support for Hungarians abroad, who receive one hundred billion forints (about € 330 million) annually, and it is usually not known what they were used for. He also pointed out that part of this money is being returned to Hungary in the form of commissions.<sup>211</sup>

The mechanism of the flow of funds from Hungary to southern Slovakia, the manner of use and the number of financial subsidies were not monitored by the Slovak state authorities; they neither had a chance to monitor it, nor did they want to monitor it. This activity was carried out in Slovakia without any influence of the Slovak state authorities, who accepted it in the interest of good neighbourly relations and with the knowledge that the Hungarian state budget finances activities that the Slovak state budget would not provide for the development of southern Slovakia (in this case we can say Felvidék).

208 *Sme*, 2. 2. 2016, Maďari nie sú ako utečenci (rozhovor R. Cupríka a M. Vrabcovej s J. Berényim.)

209 *Denník N*, 13. 9. 2017, Morvay, P. Orbán rozširuje svoj vplyv na juh Slovenska. The article also deals with the effort of V. Orbán to gain media space in the territory of the “Carpathian Basin” inhabited by the Hungarians.

210 *Denník N*, 13. 4. 2018. Uznanie Orbána znie aj z Mosta-Híd.

211 *Denník N*, 10. 10. 2018, Morvay, P. Maďarská menšina má sté narodeniny.

Financial provision of national policy, subsidy systems of support for foreign Hungarians undoubtedly exhaust the Hungarian economy. The effectiveness of these investments is questionable.

However, according to Hungarian politicians, foreign Hungarians support Orbán's policy, and those who applied for the right to vote and received it thanks to Orbán's policy also give him their votes in the elections. In the current situation, this is sufficient satisfaction for Orbán's policy for the funds invested.

### **Commemoration of history and historical events**

We consider commemoration of history and historical events and their embedding in the historical memory of Hungarians as part of the formation of historical consciousness to be the third pillar of Hungarian national cross-border policy. We will address this issue in the section on Trianon and historical memory.

Hungary's cross-border national policy is unique in the world. While the powers have occasionally been able to define their "national" interests in the world and locate their places as needed, Hungary has extended the territory of its operation to the entire Hungarian world in a constitutional way. It has long (legitimately) reproached Slovakia for defining the Slovak Republic as a state of Slovaks in the constitution; defining their state in their constitution as a place where Hungarians live in the Carpathian Basin. The whole cross-border policy of Hungary is guided by the spirit of Trianon and the re-codified modern revision.

# Citizenship – a Problem of Slovak and Hungarian Politics

## Causes, Reasons, Historical Input

The issue of citizenship became the subject of serious conflicts and discussions in Slovak-Hungarian relations with implications for minority policy in Slovakia.<sup>212</sup> Its connection to the “new” Hungarian national cross-border policy of Hungarianism is clear. There is no doubt that many discussions (Slovak-Hungarian – national, interstate or Hungarian-Hungarian) were also a consequence of this policy and its components. However, this certainly does not mean that the response of the Slovak state representations was autonomous, independent and European. One that would represent the Slovak minority policy, with its priorities, goals, visions.

The principle of dual citizenship is a legitimate and customary way of dealing with the position of the population, who for various reasons lean towards two existing states.<sup>213</sup> Like the principle of double identity, i.e. the principle when a person affiliates with two nations, feels to be part of them, part of their culture, speaks their languages, is bound to them by family or historical ties and traditions. However, in the Central European region, there is a difference between citizenship and ethnicity. Citizenship is part of the standard integration of an individual into the affiliation of the state. It is documented by a formal confirmation of the relationship between the individual and the state, by an administrative union, which becomes part of various documents proving affiliation with a state. Ethnicity is a subjective expression of a person and their belonging to a nation, ethnicity that is reported once every decade in the census. A person may voluntarily and at their own discretion choose their nationality (in some states even multiple nationalities) or they do not choose any ethnicity

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212 ŠUTAJ, Š. Trends of Research of Nationality Policy in Slovakia. In ŠUTAJ, Š. – HELDÁKOVÁ, L. – REGINÁČOVÁ, N. (eds.). *Current Issues of Research on Nationality Policy and Nationality Relations in Slovakia in the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries*. Prešov: Universum, 2017, p. 8-24; VASS, Á. Szlovák–magyar kettős állampolgárok szlovák állampolgárság nélkül. In *Magyar kisebbség*, 2013, 3-4, p. 129-151. [https://epa.oszk.hu/02100/02169/00046/pdf/EPA02169\\_magyar\\_kisebbség\\_2013\\_3-4\\_129-151.pdf](https://epa.oszk.hu/02100/02169/00046/pdf/EPA02169_magyar_kisebbség_2013_3-4_129-151.pdf) KISTELEKY, K.. Changes in the Hungarian regulation of citizenship and the Hungarian concept of nation. In *Acta Juridica Hungarica*, Akadémiai Kaidó, 2011. [online]. Dostupné na internete <<http://www.akademiai.com/doi/pdf/10.1556/AJur.52.2011.2.4>> (prtSc)

213 At present, 61 states allow dual citizenship for their citizens and 28 states forbid it. <https://www.wahaat.com/en-gb/citizenship/list-of-countries-that-allow-dual-citizenship>; More detail par example: KÖRTVÉLYESI, Zs. Nation, Nationality, and National Identity: Uses, Misuses, and the Hungarian Case of External Ethnic Citizenship. In *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law – Revue internationale de Sémiotique juridique*, 33, (2020), p. 771-798. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11196-020-09731-8>; ZUBRZYCKI, G. “We, the Polish Nation”: Ethnic and Civic Visions of Nationhood in Post-Communist Constitutional Debates. *Theory and Society* 2001, 30 (5), p. 629-668



and they do not need any formal confirmation. Citizenship and nationality are two independent indicators of an individual's declared identity. In the history of Slovakia, a bad experience with declaring ethnicity, abusing censuses to deprive citizens of German and Hungarian nationality of their citizenship after the Second World War, is still reflected in the distrust of the population to publicly declare their ethnic identity.<sup>214</sup>

It has become an internal matter of an individual and is no longer mentioned in official documents (e.g. on ID cards in Slovakia), unlike citizenship. The granting of citizenship in democratic states is not conditioned by the ethnicity of the person.

Among the old members of the European Union, only Germany, Denmark and Spain did not offer the option of dual citizenship. The example of Austria is of particular interest, as it also does not allow dual citizenship, but as stated by political scientist J. Marušiak, in some political groups it is possible to observe efforts to change this situation, e.g. in relation to separatist tendencies in South Tyrol.<sup>215</sup>

The issue has been a serious problem in mutual relations between Slovakia (Czechoslovakia) and Hungary since 1918. This problem is often mentioned in the literature, although not thoroughly analysed.<sup>216</sup> After the disintegration of the Kingdom of Hungary, there were tens of thousands of inhabitants in Slovakia who, for various reasons (home affiliation, refusal to promise loyalty...) did not acquire Czechoslovak citizenship, as evidenced by the statistics from the 1921 and 1930 censuses.<sup>217</sup> Changes of state borders after the Vienna Arbitration of 1938 and the subsequent restoration of the original borders after the signing of the Ceasefire Agreement with Hungary of 20 January 1945, further complicated this situation. The subsequent loss of citizenship of the Hungarian population and the exchange of population led to further complications in civic affairs. The return of citizenship to the Hungarians in the Czechoslovak Republic in October 1948 stabilized the situation to some extent, but it took a long time for problematic issues (problem with taking the oath of loyalty, denial of citizenship for war criminals and "enemies" of the people's democratic establish-

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214 JECH, K. – KAPLAN, K. *Dekréty prezidenta republiky 1940 – 1945. Dokumenty, 1*, Brno: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR v nakladatelství Doplněk, 1995, p. 358; ŠUTAJ, Š. Hungarian minority in Slovakia 1918 – 1989. In *Minorities in Politics*. Vydal Česko-slovenský výbor Európskej kultúrnej nadácie. Bratislava 1991, p. 23-33; ŠUTAJ, Š. – GAJDOŠ, M. – JUROVÁ, A. – OLEJNÍK, M. Ethnic minorities and their culture in Slovakia in the context of historical development in twentieth century. In KOVÁČ, D. (ed). *Slovak contributions to 19<sup>th</sup> international Congress of Historical Sciences*. Bratislava: Veda, 2000, p. 135-149; FILEP, B. *The Politics of Good Neighbourhood. State, civil society and the enhancement of cultural capital in East Central Europe*. London – New York, Routledge, 2017; JUHÁSOVÁ, T. The Troubled Past of Hungarian and German Minorities in Slovakia and Their Representation in Museum. In *Journal of Nationalism, Memory & Language Politics*, volume 12, Issue 1, 2018, p. 52-71.

215 *Pravda*, 13. 9. 2018, Marušiak, J. Koniec alpskej idyly.

216 VERNER, V. *Státní občanství a domovské právo republiky Československé*, Praha: Právnícké vydavatelství JUDr. Václav Tomek, 1947.

217 POPÉLY, Gy. A felvidéki magyarság számanak alakuháza az 1921 es 1930 évi csehszlovákiai népszámlálások tükrében. In *Századok*, 123, 1-2, 1989, 44-79.

ment) to consolidate.<sup>218</sup> The “socialist” solution of citizenship was also confirmed by the signing of the Agreement between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Hungarian Republic on the regulation of certain issues of citizenship from 1961.<sup>219</sup>

After the split of Czechoslovakia, the problem of citizenship was addressed quite generously, for the benefit and in the interest of the inhabitants of both successor states and by mutual agreement, based on an international agreement. Precise conditions were defined, not based on the declaration of nationality (declared or proven ethnic identity), but on permanent residence, place of birth, parental affiliation, as is the case in most European countries.

The nature of Hungary’s national policy has accentuated intervention in favour of Hungarians abroad over a long period of time, since the fall of communist regimes, and partially even while they lasted. The request for the introduction of dual citizenship for Hungarians who found themselves outside their homeland after the adoption of the Treaty of Trianon on 4 June 1920 was submitted by the World Union of Hungarians.

The then Prime Minister of Hungary, F. Gyurcsány, was reluctant to respond to this request from the outset. He justified this by saying that the neighbouring states could see this as an escalation of Hungarian demands (however, this argument could not play a significant role in the domestic political environment) and the financial burden that could arise with increased requests for Hungarian citizenship to help them in difficult economic situations, especially in the non-EU regions of Transylvania (Romania), Transcarpathia (Ukraine) and Vojvodina (Serbia). The fact that Hungarians from these countries, with Hungarian citizenship, could flood the EU was also perceived as a threat. As the representatives of Slovak Hungarians (P. Csáky and J. Berényi) said, Hungarian citizenship did not have any economic significance for them, but gradually it became interesting for part of the Hungarian elite in Slovakia, as an emotional connection with the mother nation (in this case the state).

According to F. Gyurcsány, non-EU compatriots were to receive special passports valid for entry into Hungary and other EU countries, and the rules for immigration and naturalization were to be facilitated. The government planned to amend the relevant laws by June 2005.<sup>220</sup> However, the unfavourable position of the government angered the representatives of foreign Hungarians, including the SMK in Slovakia. At the MÁÉRT meeting in November 2004, the negotiations failed because of the

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218 ŠUTA J., Š. Československé štátne občianstvo obyvateľov maďarskej národnosti po roku 1945 z pohľadu česko-slovenských vzťahov. In *Česko-Slovenská historická ročenka 2002*, Brno: Masarykova univerzita v Brně, 2002, s. 35-56; THER, P. *The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe*. New York: Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2014.

219 Vyhláška ministerstva zahraničných vecí z 8. 4. 1961 o Dohovore medzi Československou socialistickou republikou a Maďarskou ľudovou republikou o úprave niektorých otázok štátneho občianstva <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/1961/37/>

220 SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. – SZERENCSEŠ, J. Politika vlády Ferenca Gyurcsány a zahraničným Maďarom. In ŠUTAJOVÁ, J. – ĎURKOVSKÁ, M. (eds.). *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku v procesoch transformácie po roku 1989: (identita a politika II)*. Prešov: Univerzum, 2008, p. 42-53; *Pravda*, 14. 1. 2005. SMK nastúpilo cestu kompromisu.

sixteen entities that took part in the negotiations, only fourteen voted in favour of the adoption of the final declaration. According to the chairman of the SMK B. Bugár, the representatives of all organizations representing foreign Hungarians signed a joint document in which they urged the Hungarian government to refrain from argumentation offending compatriots. They urged Hungarian citizens to say yes in the referendum on dual citizenship. The government parties - the Hungarian Socialist Party (Maďarská socialistická strana – MSZP) and the Union of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) refused to sign the document. However, the opposition led by V. Orbán clearly supported the request for dual citizenship. V. Orbán declared: “*Every virtuous Hungarian will vote in favour of.*”<sup>221</sup>

At this stage, the representatives of the SMK in Slovakia declared a more restrained position on the issue, although their statements showed some disappointment with the position of the Hungarian governing parties. It was the question of dual citizenship that divided the SMK. B. Bugár and L. Nagy did not reject the possibility of dual citizenship, but said that citizenship would only have a symbolic meaning for Hungarians in Slovakia.<sup>222</sup> “A prominent representative of the SMK M. Duray presented the issue of dual citizenship from another perspective. “*Hungarian citizenship was confiscated from us, we did not renounce it, we lost it not under Hungarian law,*” he stressed in connection with the forthcoming referendum on dual citizenship in Hungary. According to M. Duray, this meant that it would be appropriate to grant Hungarian citizenship to Hungarians who were forced to accept the citizenship of another state in 1920. For Duray, citizenship was emotionally tied to the historical homeland, the state, even though the legal unity of this historical formation disintegrated in 1920. Duray saw this situation as an interruption of citizenship, and granting Hungarian citizenship to foreign Hungarians would restore its legal continuity, which, according to him, would not question European stability and peace.”<sup>223</sup>

With regards to Hungary’s efforts to introduce a law on dual citizenship, the dominant principles related to the instrumentalist understanding of ethnicity (place of birth, permanent residence) were replaced by Hungarian ethnicity and primordialist understanding of ethnicity.<sup>224</sup> The question “*Should we grant Hungarian citizenship on favourable terms to those compatriots who are interested in it and who can somehow prove that they are really Hungarian?*” asked in the referendum, cannot be explained otherwise, as confirmed by the statements of some Hungarian politicians or M. Duray on the legal continuity of citizenship. In the discussion in the Hungarian parliament, Hungarian politicians expressed the opinion that it was a matter of re-

221 ORÁLEK, P. Korektní, ale ne bezkonfliktní. Aktuální stav slovensko-maďarských vzťahů (2005) <http://www.integrace.cz/integrace/clanek.asp?id=862>

222 *Pravda*, 13. 11. 2004. Maďari sa nedohodli na občianstve; *Pravda*, 26. 11. 2004. Politici SMK podporujú dvojité štátne občianstvo; *Pravda*, 8. 1. 2005. Bugár chce pre Maďarov dve občianstva.

223 *Pravda*, 28. 11. 2004. Občianstvo nám zhabali; *Szabad Újság*, 18. 11. 2004, No. 45/2004, p. 11, 12, 13, 14. Állampolgárság és nemzetpolgárság.

224 More detail e.g.: SÝKORA, P. Etnicita v evolučno-psychologickej perspektíve. In *Filozofia*, Vol. 58, 2003, No. 1, p. 62-69.

turning citizenship to Hungarians, who already had this citizenship before, and the principle of continuity, which was to build a bridge across borders and time in building a unified cross-border nation. The political ethnicity of the issue is also evidenced by the fact that the lawmakers did not even consider allowing all the people, whose ancestors lived in the Kingdom of Hungary, regardless of ethnicity, to apply for Hungarian citizenship, but only those who felt Hungarian.

The key issue for the assessment of the law on citizenship in Hungary is therefore the question addressed by Slovak and Hungarian historians, which has divided them for a long time. A question whether Hungary after 1918 is a new state, a successor state or a successor to Historic Hungary. Most Slovak historians build on the thesis that after the First World War, the Habsburg Monarchy – Austria-Hungary disintegrated and Hungary and the Czechoslovak Republic are among the newly created successor states. Thus these are new states, created on the ruins of a historic state.

Hungarian historians and legal historians generally believe that there is an unquestionable state continuity between Historic Hungary and today's Hungary. Hungary was founded on the legal and political continuity of the Kingdom of Hungary and the states from the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the preservation of its integrity.<sup>225</sup>

From the Slovak point of view, it is unthinkable to build on the citizenship of Historic Hungary a century after its dissolution and consider it a good basis for the creation of a new state – civic union. In the world, it would be very difficult to find a precedent for such a way of addressing citizenship as was presented in the Hungarian model of dual citizenship.

The referendum on dual citizenship was held in Hungary on 5 December 2004. The counting of votes showed that 37.2 % of registered voters came to the referendum. There were 51.54 % of voters in favour of granting citizenship, 48.48 % of voters were against it. Over 1.4 million people were in favour of granting citizenship to foreign Hungarians, more than 1.3 million were against it. The attendance at the referendum was below 50 %, therefore the conditions for the referendum to be valid were not met.<sup>226</sup>

The situation was also confirmed by Prime Minister Gyurcsány. “*The referendum suffered defeat, its initiators failed, and voters decided for responsible patriotism,*” he said, satisfied that the Hungarians had not been drawn into “any adventure.” He emphasized that, as Prime Minister, he was responsible for 15 million Hungarians, ten million inside and another five million outside the country's borders. “*I hear the voice of the nation, I hear their no against bias, fruitless looking back to the past and against national and social populism,*” he said, thanking the voters

225 More detail on the perception of successor states e.g.: ROMSICS, I. *Trianonská mierová zmluva*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2006; DEÁK L. *Trianon: ilúzie a skutočnosť*. Bratislava: Kubko Gorál, 1996; HRONSKÝ, M. *Boj o Slovensko a Trianon 1918 – 1920*. Bratislava: Národné literárne centrum, 1998; ŠUTAJ, Š. *Parižska konferencia 1946 a mierová zmluva s Maďarskom*. Prešov: Universum, 2014.

226 *Pravda*, 6. 12. 2004. Dvojité občianstvo Maďari nepodporili.

who “do not confuse nationalism with responsible patriotism.”<sup>227</sup> However, Fidesz called the referendum a success. It allegedly confirmed that the majority of Hungarian citizens want Hungarian citizenship for the Hungarians in neighbouring countries. Fidesz’s closest allies among compatriots, including the then chairman of the SMK B. Bugár, confirmed this. In 2010, when Fidesz, already as a governing party, enforced dual citizenship, he claimed that they acted according to the will of the citizens, confirmed by the referendum.<sup>228</sup>

According to the Slovak Act on Citizenship of 2005, foreigners who wanted to apply for citizenship could acquire Slovak citizenship, if they had a permanent residence in Slovakia for at least eight years, three years were enough for foreign Slovaks. The only condition for easier acquisition of citizenship was a certificate of a Slovak living abroad. To get this certificate, it was enough to have direct Slovak ancestors or to “preserve national consciousness”, which was to be testified by an expatriate organization or two other foreign Slovaks. The law defined national consciousness as “active manifestations of commitment to the Slovak nation and to the values that represent the Slovak language, Slovak cultural heritage and traditions.” What is more, foreign Slovaks from countries outside the EU did not have to apply for a temporary residence if they were staying in Slovakia for longer.<sup>229</sup>

Elections were held in both countries in 2010, however, the Hungarian ones were earlier. Still, the result of the Hungarian elections did calm down Slovak – Hungarian relations. The new political representation of Hungary made it clear that the act on the citizenship of Hungarians beyond borders is a priority in their policy. The elections in Slovakia were not considered a reason for changes in the timing of the event. Prior to the adoption of the Hungarian Act on Citizenship, there were no official negotiations on this issue. Although the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs M. Lajčák and the designated Minister J. Martonyi took place on 12 May 2010, the Hungarian Minister did not intend to discuss citizenship. He only confirmed that the Hungarian side has problems with the position of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, and especially with the controversial language law. Minister Martonyi did not consider the institute of dual citizenship to be a threat, and assured that “citizenship will not be associated with the right to vote or be elected in Hungarian elections.” The intention to adopt the law on dual citizenship at the first session of the new Hungarian parliament met with resentment on the Slovak side. M. Lajčák pointed out that the Slovak Government would also turn to the relevant international institutions in this regard and called it a “hostile step”. Slovakia immediately called the Slovak Ambassador in Budapest for discussions in Bratislava.<sup>230</sup>

227 *Pravda*, 6. 12. 2004. Dvojité občianstvo Maďari nepodporili.

228 *Denník N*, 3. 10. 2016, Morvay, P. Hlavne sa bojte, odkazuje vláda Maďarom.

229 More detail: SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. – ŠUTAJ, Š. *Starostlivosť o krajanov v zahraničí...*; ŠUTAJ, Š. – SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. Národnostná politika Slovenska a politika Maďarska voči zahraničným Maďarom. In ŠUTAJ, Š. a kol. *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku po roku 1989*. Prešov: Univerzum, 2008, p. 18-30; *Pravda*, 13. 5. 2010, Slováci idú žalovať na Maďarov.

230 *Aktuálne*, 12. 5. 2010, Vzťahy s Maďarskom sa neupokojili. <http://aktualne.centrum.sk/domov/politika/clanek.phtml?id=1207801>

Either directly or through the embassy in Budapest, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic sent a number of notes to prominent representatives of the new ruling party Fidesz that the Slovak side does not want such a sensitive standard approved without proper consultation between the governments of both countries required by the *Basic Agreement*. They also drew attention to the Bolzano Recommendations on National Minorities<sup>231</sup> of the OSCE High Commissioner and the Venice Commission Report on the Preferential Treatment of Minorities by their Kin – State of 2001. Slovak diplomacy also repeatedly pointed that the atmosphere of mutual relations will be disrupted if such a “sensitive” legal standard is adopted under the symbolism of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Trianon. The designated Deputy Prime Minister of the Hungarian Government, Zs. Semjén said that they would provide information to the Slovak Prime Minister, but would not discuss what they wanted to do with regard to citizenship with the Slovak Government, as it was “*part of the Hungarian national sovereignty*”. Slovak diplomacy pointed out that citizenship expresses a relationship with the state, not with the nation and is not related to the rights of persons belonging to a national minority, nor to the development of cooperation with compatriots abroad. They emphasized the Hungarian Government’s obligation to consult the matters of law which have an effect on the citizens of neighbouring countries.<sup>232</sup>

231 Bolzano Recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities in Inter-state Relations (2008) <https://archiv.vlada.gov.sk/ludskeprava/data/files/4540.pdf>

232 In particular, they had in mind the OSCE High Commissioner’s Recommendations on National Minorities in International Relations of 2008, also known as the Bolzano Recommendations. Recommendations No. 10 and 11 state: “*States shall refrain from taking unilateral action, including the provision of benefits to foreigners, on the basis of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious or historical ties, the intention or effect of which is to undermine the principles of territorial integrity. ... States may take into account preferred language skills and cultural, historical or family ties when deciding whether to grant citizenship to persons abroad. However, States should ensure that such the granting of citizenship respects the principles of friendly and good neighbourly relations and territorial sovereignty, and should refrain from mass granting of citizenship, even if the State of residence allows dual citizenship.*” At the OSCE on 20 October 2009, the High Commissioner said with regard to minorities in the context of European security: “*States may not exercise jurisdiction over a population or part of the population of another state within the territory of that state without their consent. Sovereignty is the basis of international law. Extraterritorial jurisdiction is limited. Citizenship is an equally important issue. Granting citizenship to people living abroad is clearly one of the most common reasons for tension and conflict. ... Relative states should refrain from mass granting of citizenship, even if the legislation of the state in which they live allows for dual citizenship. ... a related State may not distribute passports to nationals of another State and then ask for special protection for a particular group of its nationals living in the territory of that other State. ... States should refrain from taking unilateral action. I recommend that mandatory consultations with the state in whose territory minorities live, if benefits are to be granted to people living abroad.*” (Information on the initiative to adopt an amendment to Act No. LV of 1993 on Hungarian citizenship regulating the issue of dual citizenship in the National Assembly of the Republic of Hungary – wider international context and implications for the Slovak Republic. Material from the Slovak Government session on 14 May 2010).

Fico's first government was preparing for Hungary's action. At the meeting of the Slovak government on 14 May 2010, analyses of the impact of the adoption of the law on dual citizenship in Hungary and proposals for solutions were prepared. The Government took note of the material and, based on the recommendations in the document, was to turn to the international institutions of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Venice Commission, the PACE and NATO.<sup>233</sup>

At the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, the head of the diplomacy, M. Lajčák, admitted that Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Serbia also have standards similar to those adopted by Hungary. There was the precedent in the neighbouring countries in the form of the Romanian-Moldovan, Serbian-Bosnian, Croatian-Bosnian and Slovenian-Italian solution of dual citizenship.<sup>234</sup> M. Lajčák explained how the situation is different in comparison to some of these solutions: "It's because we mind. And this must not be done in a way that the countries concerned mind. If Moldova doesn't mind (regarding Romania), then there is no problem. If Slovakia minds, then there is a problem..." We respond on the basis of our historical and political motives.<sup>235</sup>

Former Ambassador to Hungary Š. Markuš, political scientist L. Öllös, or RHS spokesman K. Petőcz, but also P. Csáky, did not consider the law a problem, nor the fact that it was not consulted with the Slovak party, but rather perceived it as a manifestation of the pre-election hysteria of Slovak political parties. Prime Minister R. Fico convened the Security Council of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Defence and Justice were to promptly prepare an analysis of security risks arising from the law. The chairman of the KDH parliamentary club demanded immediate convening of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council of the SR. I. Radičová announced that it was not necessary to frighten and convene security councils and that she and her party were able to "offer a solution to the situation after the elections without frightening citizens with sanctions."<sup>236</sup>

After announcing the preparation of the Hungarian law on citizenship for foreign Hungarians, the Slovak Government requested that a meeting of the ZSMK be convened. Hungary replied that the commission meeting is only possible after 28 May, when the new Hungarian cabinet will be in office. Prime Minister Fico asked the am-

233 Information on the initiative to adopt an amendment to Act No. LV of 1993 on Hungarian citizenship...

234 CULIC, I. Dilemmas of belonging: Hungarians from Romania. In *Nationalities Papers*, 2006, 34, 2, p. 175-200; KOVÁCS, M. M. The Politics of Dual Citizenship in Hungary. In *Journal Citizenship Studies*, 2006, 4, p. 431-451; VIZI, B. Dual citizenship and policies toward kin-minorities in East-Central Europe: a comparison between Hungary, Romania, and the Republic of Moldova. In KÁNTOR, Z. – MAJTÉNYI, B. – IEDA, O. – VIZI, B. – HALÁSZ, I. (eds.). *The Hungarian status law: nation building and/or minority protection*. Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2004, p. 239-269.

235 *Pravda*, 19. 5. 2010, Parlament bude pre maďarskú novelu do volieb v pohotovosti.

236 *Webnoviny*, 19. 5. 2010, Dzurinda: Návrh Budapešti nie je európsky; *Pravda*, 13. 5. 2010, Slováci idú žalovať na Maďarov; Premiér pre zákon o dvojacom občianstve zvolá Bezpečnostnú radu SR <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=udalosti/udalost&MasterID=47359>

bassador in Budapest, P. Weiss, to arrange a meeting with V. Orbán.<sup>237</sup> The Hungarian side responded to the announced Slovak countermeasures by attacking the Slovak “weak” spot. Hungarian politicians sent a letter to the European Parliament with reservations about the Slovak language law.

The document was also signed by the MP of the Slovak Parliament, M. Duray. Replying to the objections that he had joined forces with Hungarian MP against his country, he said that in his opinion the law was unconstitutional and “*I am involved as a Hungarian, not as a Slovak*”.<sup>238</sup> Zs. Semjén, the future Deputy Prime Minister, did not consider Slovakia’s protests to be significant. “*There is one nation with Hungarian citizenship ... The main problem with Slovakia is not dual citizenship, but the language law, Beneš’s decrees, Hedviga Malinová and last year’s expulsion of László Sólyom.*”<sup>239</sup>

On 25 May 2010, Minister M. Lajčák met with the High Commissioner for National Minorities of the OSCE, K. Vollebaek in the Hague. He negotiated with him on the adoption of the Hungarian law on the granting of citizenship to Hungarians abroad. He asked Vollebaek to analyse the law and give his recommendations, which would be valid for all OSCE member states, and thus for Hungary as well. The Minister announced that the planned countermeasures by Slovakia, which would entail, for example, the loss of citizenship and thus the impossibility of performing a public function for those who apply for Hungarian citizenship, are a European standard. “*The High Commissioner has taken note of our intentions. ... Slovakia is not a scapegoat or a whipping boy, we don’t attack, but we have the rights and obligations to defend ourselves.*”<sup>240</sup>

The SMK issued an opinion that was to calm the situation: “*The SMK reminds that the new law comes to force only from 1 January 2011, i.e. there is enough time to resolve the issues raised.*” The opinion stated that the SMK rejects irresponsible statements by government politicians and calls on everyone to take a responsible position. They interpreted the granting of second citizenship as the fulfilment of human rights and the recognition of the fact of the dual identity of the citizen. The SMK

237 *Aktuálne*, 19. 5. 2010, Fico: Arogantné Maďarsko. Chcem rokovat’ s Orbánom, <http://aktualne.centrum.sk/domov/politika/clanek.phtml?id=1208282>. X. Meeting of the Mixed Slovak-Hungarian Commission for Minorities took place on 2 February 2011.

238 *Hospodárske noviny*, 19. 5. 2010, Maďari v Bruseli zaútočili na náš zákon.

239 *Pravda*, 21. 5. 2010, Uhorsko nemožno oživiť, lebo žije.

240 <http://www.nrsr.sk/Dynamic/Sprava.aspx?MasterID=47518> OSCE High Commissioner Knut Vollebaek also said that granting citizenship on a principle other than residence is a reason for political tensions between states. “*If you want to apply the jurisdiction on citizens on a different principle than the place of residence, it carries the potential for tension. I have warned states against granting citizenship on an ethnic, national, linguistic or cultural basis and have alerted them to the consequences after granting such citizenship.*” Vollebaek emphasized that the granting of citizenship is the exclusive right of every state, but that does not mean that every state can do what it wants. “*Bilateral consultations are recommended in such cases. This is especially true for Hungary and Slovakia, who are partners in the EU and NATO and who signed bilateral agreements,*” and repeated the thesis from the OSCE document Bolzano Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-state Relations.



considered the Slovak countermeasures to be an attempt to make citizens lose confidence.<sup>241</sup>

### Adoption of the Hungarian Act on Citizenship in 2010<sup>242</sup>

The Act on Citizenship for All Hungarians, adopted by the Hungarian Parliament in May 2010, also falls within the framework of Hungary's national strategy extending across borders. The euphoria before the adoption of the law was reflected in the speech of L. Kövér. He stated that a new era could begin for the whole nation by concluding the post-Trianon period, and announced a new national policy *“that would make the use of the term ‘on this side of the border and beyond’ obsolete... There is one Hungarian world, one Hungarian nation and every Hungarian is responsible for all Hungarians ... Historic Hungary cannot be revived, ... but it is not necessary for it to rise from the dead, because it still lives in the souls, culture, our language, in the churches we build and in our interpersonal contacts.”*<sup>243</sup>

The law was submitted to Parliament on 17 May 2010. Members of the National Assembly of the Republic of Hungary approved it on 26 May 2010. In the 386-member Hungarian parliament, 344 MP voted in favour, three were against and five abstained. The amendment to the Act on Citizenship allows ethnic Hungarians to apply for citizenship without having a permanent residence in Hungary, if they are of Hungarian origin, do not have a criminal record and have demonstrated knowledge of the Hungarian language. Applications for citizenship were to be provided to applicants by Hungarian foreign diplomatic representations. The law entered into force on 20 August, the day of the Hungarian public holiday (Constitution Day and St. Stephen's Day), and came into force on 1 January 2011. From January 3, 2011, foreign Hungarians could apply for Hungarian citizenship in a simplified procedure.<sup>244</sup>

Even after the adoption of the law, Hungarian officials tried to derogate the effects of the law on relations with neighbours, stressing that it was a standard law that could not affect them. The following prevailed in Hungarian discourse and argumentation in favour of the law: the right to act sovereignly and regardless of the opinions of others (neighbours, EU), connecting the principle of citizenship with the principle of ethnicity, arguing the neutrality of law that is not directed towards other states, the right to build citizenship, the justification for the procedure as a consequence of the injustice of Trianon. In relation to Hungarians living in Hungary, but also to neigh-

241 *Webnoviny*, 23. 5. 2010, SMK odmieta hystériu okolo zákona o občianstve.

242 More detail on the path to the act on citizenship e.g. in KURUCZ, M. Dvojaké občianstvo v maďarskom politickom diskurze v rokoch 1998 – 2010. In *Studia Politica Slovaca*, 2012, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 76-93.

243 *Pravda*, 21. 5. 2010, Uhorsko nemožno oživit', lebo žije.

244 *Sme*, 22. 5. 2010, Budapešť sleduje cieľ ako Rusi v Gruzínsku; *Sme*, 31. 5. 2010, Maďarský prezident podpísal zákon o dvojacom občianstve; <http://www.nrsr.sk/Dynamic/Sprava.aspx?MasterID=47520>, Maďarský parlament prijal návrh zákona o dvojacom občianstve; *Aktuality*, 9. 11. 2017, V Maďarsku panujú obavy..., <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/537670/v-madarsku-panuju-obavy-z-okliestenia-prav-madarskej-mensiny-v-zahranici>.

bouring states, it was also argued that the adoption of the law does not imply the right to vote for foreign Hungarians.

L. Sólyom emphasized that Hungary clearly had to help members of Hungarian national minorities living in neighbouring countries or elsewhere in the world. “*Cultural communities are independent of state borders and citizenship, although they respect them, as they do not seek to unite in one political nation. They only demand that other political nations allow them to develop their specific culture and maintain close contact with parts of the mother nation that live in other countries.*”<sup>245</sup> In connection with the act on dual citizenship, the former Hungarian president also mentioned the concept of a cultural nation, which should connect Hungarians in their homeland with those who live in the surrounding countries. He stated at the Venice Commission that they neither intended to change their borders, nor connect with foreign Hungarians on a political level.

He said: “*Members of a cultural nation living as a minority are loyal citizens of the country in which they live, but want to maintain cultural solidarity with the cultural nation as a whole.*” According to the Hungarian president, the EU should recognize the concept of a cultural nation because a cultural nation is a reality, independent of borders and citizenship.<sup>246</sup>

Possibly no one doubts that there is one Hungarian cultural nation. However, in the interpretation of Hungarian politicians, there is a direct connection between affiliation to the nation and citizenship of the Hungarian state. It is therefore questionable whether, in order to have a sense of belonging to a nation, one also needs to have its citizenship. In the Hungarian case, with regard to foreign Hungarians, this premise was applied and became part of Hungarian national policy. The new Hungarian constitution adopted later brought not only feelings of belonging to Hungary, but also obligations to these new citizens. This can lead to serious international disputes over the possible consular protection of these citizens. Hungary has a constitutional obligation to protect its citizen, including those who live beyond their borders. Répássy, the Chairman of the Constitutional Law Committee of the Hungarian Parliament, argued that “*whoever applies for Hungarian citizenship while not settling in Hungary, such Hungarian citizenship will be associated with rights and obligations only in Hungary, in accordance with international law in their home country and existing citizenship*”.<sup>247</sup>

The Act on Citizenship was followed by a draft of a new constitution, which enshrined the legislative framework of the already adopted Act on Citizenship. Here, too, the problem of the continuity of the Hungarian state played an important role. This law defined prerequisites that accept the perception of the historical continuity of Hungary. The adoption of law should be primarily seen as the fulfilment of the Hungarian program of national policy, in which citizenship was one of the most important pillars of building not only a virtual but also a real relationship of the Hun-

245 *Sme*, 4. 6. 2010, Trianon sa nepáči ani socialistom, no k Fideszu sa nepridali.

246 *Sme*, 6. 6. 2010, Nechceme menit' hranice.

247 *Sme*, 26. 5. 2010, Trianon a Kaliňák.

garian state with the Hungarians of “deprived” by Trianon. The initial optimism of the Hungarian authorities and the problems with the mass acceptance of Hungarian citizenship by Slovak Hungarians on the Slovak side turned out to be unnecessary.

### **Slovak Response to the Hungarian Act on Citizenship**

All Slovak leaders responded to the Hungarian Act on Citizenship negatively. Most political parties in Slovakia considered the Hungarian Act on Citizenship to be a violation of international law, international customs and diplomatic decency. The EU and its institutions, the Venice Commission, the OSCE were to provide support and Slovakia expected them to hold their side. Some Slovak political elites immediately tried to use the Hungarian law for pre-election mobilization, with a common element to build a sense of threat to society, borders, the state and ethnicity, all linked to the magical word Trianon. The differences were only in the extent of resistance and in the way of communication.

- a/ The nationalist-populist reaction was typical of the SNS and Smer. They called for immediate action, calling it a threat to Slovak statehood and its territorial sovereignty.
- b/ Moderate-diplomatic response (KDH...) – international institutions need to be urged to prevent tensions in Central Europe
- c/ Expectant, empathic-optimistic (the SaS, the SDKÚ, Most-Híd...) – when we come to power, we will easily solve everything by negotiations with partners in Hungary.
- d/ Alibistic-pro-Hungarian reaction of the SMK reaction, who derogated the Hungarian law, justified its legitimacy and, fortunately for this type of response to the Hungarian law, soon they did not have to address its problems, but could address the situation that arose after Slovakia’s response to the Hungarian law.

In his address broadcasted after the STV News, President I. Gašparovič, with all seriousness, drew attention to the consequences of the Hungarian Act on Citizenship: *“The Slovak Republic, as an ally and neighbour of citizens directly affected by the amendment, has often called for professional and political consultations on this topic at all levels... I am convinced that it was the duty of the Government and the National Council of the Slovak Republic to respond immediately to the Hungarian law adopted in this manner by adopting adequate legislative measures. Our duty is to prevent ethnic and political conflicts in Europe, such as the intervention of the National Assembly of the Republic of Hungary in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic.”* He drew special attention to the connection of this issue with Trianon. He reminded that *“political representation in Hungary is embarking on a historically dangerous path. It ignores good European morals, denies the principles of international law, closes itself in the circle of political self-deception, does not respect the letter, spirit and mechanisms of signed bilateral and multilateral agreements.”* He particularly urged Slovak citizens of Hungarian nationality: *“Believe me, there is no reason to apply for citizenship of the neighbouring Hungary, as Slovakia, as a member of the Europe-*

*an Union, in accordance with the civic principle, unconditionally guarantees your civic rights, equal participation in political life and socio-economic prosperity of the Slovak Republic.*<sup>248</sup>

The response to Orbán's cross-border nationalism and violation of the principles of good neighbourly relations was the Slovak primitive nationalism of the governing coalition, escalating manifestations of aggressive demagoguery, with politicians of Smer, especially R. Fico at press conferences,<sup>249</sup> and the SNS exaggerated and hyperbolized the threat to Slovakia. According to these, not only Orbán's policy, but also Slovak Hungarians posed a security threat to the country's existence. They painted the peaceful perspectives of neighbourly relations in black and combined them with the ideas of the restoration of them Greater Hungary, or the state of devastating autonomy as the main goal of Hungarian policy.

In the French daily *Le Figaro*, Prime Minister R. Fico criticized Hungary, which decided to simplify the granting of citizenship to ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring countries, called Slovakia a country with an anti-fascist tradition and called Hungary an "extremist country that exports its brown plague."<sup>250</sup> In Slovakia, his responses were sharp too: "... the law is to become a tool for fulfilling the revisionist dream. Greater Hungarian nationalism and revisionism have become the official policy of Hungary ... revisionism and the brown plague are returning."<sup>251</sup> A. Danko, later the chairman of the SNS, described the law as stealing citizens, which has no parallel in post-war history, and its consequence is that "we still do not know which people are still Slovak citizens or not today on the basis of the fact that they have accepted Hungarian citizenship."<sup>252</sup>

The KDH declared that they were not against the institute of dual citizenship by definition, but they were against the form in which the Hungarian National Assembly wanted to legislate it. "If the Republic of Hungary does not want a constructive dialogue with Slovakia, then Slovakia will have to make constructive decisions," said the KDH chairman J. Figel' at a press conference on 19 May 2010. According to him, it is normal if a citizen who does not want to give up their original citizenship, but at the same time wants to obtain the status of a citizen in another state to which they immigrated and live in tries to acquire dual citizenship. However, a form in which a state actively seeks the people to whom it offers citizenship beyond its borders is unusual. J. Figel', who discussed the situation with the chairman of the European People's Party (EPP) W. Martens said "I think the European soil is very important in finding a European way or solution. What is proposed from Budapest is a Carpathian-type solution, and it is not to the benefit of 21<sup>st</sup>-century Europe." According to his own words, Figel' used the term 'Carpathian' intentionally, as it is often used by Hun-

248 *Pravda*, 28. 5. 2010, Dvojité občianstvo neprináša nič nové, ani práva.

249 *Hospodárske noviny*, 20. 5. 2014, Kugla, Martin, M. Dvojité občianstvo Maďarov nás neohrozí.

250 *Pravda*, 4. 6. 2010, Maďarsko sa správa, akoby sme neexistovali.

251 *Pravda*, 26. 5. 2010, Fico vyčkáva na Budapešť.

252 *Teraz*, 17. 5. 2014, S Jobbikom sa nikto z národných strán baviť nebude, <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/jobik-sns-politika-eurovolby/84732-clanok.html>

garian politicians in their political vocabulary. He emphasized that Hungary should adhere to the established practices in international relations.<sup>253</sup>

In one of his essays, L. Szigeti, the director of the Kalligram publishing house, wrote on reflections on Hungarian citizenship: *“The most characteristic feature of Orbán’s Hungary is the national-ideological pressure, like in Horthy’s time, so I guess it is understandable that as a Hungarian in Slovakia, I do not want to become a Hungarian citizen. I am repulsed by the ridiculously recurring anti-democratic defeatism, which, however, is also present in Slovakia. ... However, the Slovak, who is now feeling joy, or rather mischief, should not forget the analogies that we enjoyed here during the period of Mečiar and the first Fico government to the fullest. He should also not forget that the scum mentality forever longs for power and affects all structures, not just the political ones.”*<sup>254</sup> We must admit that Szigeti’s characterization of the struggle for power by abusing ethnicity is not only concise, analytical towards the past, the situation in 2014 – 2018, but also for situations after 2018, which is a chronological milestone for this work.

### **As a Countermeasure, Slovakia Adopted an Amendment to the Act on Citizenship.**

The amendment to the Act on Citizenship was prepared by the first government of R. Fico with coalition partners the HZDS and the SNS in May 2010. The government was discussing the amendment already at a time when it was being discussed by the Hungarian Parliament. On 25 May 2010, the government adjourned the meeting and expected the decision of the Hungarian Parliament. This already documented the importance it attached to the Hungarian Act on Citizenship. On 25 May 2010, the National Council of the Slovak Republic adopted a resolution in which it responded to the amendment to the Act on Citizenship, which was discussed by the National Assembly of the Republic of Hungary. *“The National Council of the Slovak Republic is following with deep concern the initiative ... which, by amending the Act on Citizenship, would enable the granting of dual citizenship also to citizens of the Slovak Republic. ... expresses their fundamental and principled disagreement, as well as its readiness to take adequate legislative countermeasures to prevent the negative impact of the initiative ... on the citizens of the Slovak Republic.”* They pointed out the extraterritoriality of such a procedure and the inconsistency with international law, violation of the agreement on good friendly relations and warned *“against repeated discrediting of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon and the post-war territorial organization of Europe”*.<sup>255</sup> The unaligned MP, who were already members of Most-Híd

253 *Sme*, 23. 5. 2010, Maďarská verzia dvojakého občianstva je neobvyklá.

254 *Pravda*, 23. 6. 2012, Szigeti, L. Nesloboda slobodnej spoločnosti.

255 <http://aktualne.centrum.sk/domov/politika/clanek.phtml?id=1208693>

Resolution of the National Council of the Slovak Republic of 25 May 2010 on the draft amendment to the Act on Citizenship, negotiated by the National Assembly of the Republic of Hungary.

at that time (B. Bugár, Zs. Simon, T. Bastrnák, L. Nagy, G. Gál, L. Žitňanská and part of the MP of the SDKÚ-DS) did not take part in the voting. The most pessimistic vision of the impact of Hungarian law on Slovakia was given by SNS chairwoman A. Belousovová: *“The Hungarian law on dual citizenship is a tool for the creation of a Greater Hungary and everyone who does not see it is either blind or a collaborator...it practically realizes Hitler’s vision of the organization of Central Europe ... the National Council has a duty not to give the Hungarians a single citizen or a square inch of land.”*<sup>256</sup>

On the same day, 26 May 2010, when the Hungarian Parliament decided on the Act on Citizenship, the Slovak Act was approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The amendment to the Act on Citizenship was approved by the Slovak Parliament by 90 votes out of 115 MP present, seven were against, there were 17 abstentions and one MP did not vote. The law was supported by the members of Smer-SD, the SNS, the HZDS and the KDH. SDKÚ-DS did not vote for it. The Slovak standard was controversial and sewn with a hot needle. Slovakia did not take advantage of the opportunity offered by the government’s resolution of 14 May and did not wait for the opinion of the European institutions, which the government recommended. The law entered into force on 17 July 2010 on the commemorative day of the adoption of the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic in 1992, which was to be a symbolic counterweight to the Hungarian law, which entered into force on 20 August, a public holiday in Hungary. Whereas previously a Slovak citizen could lose their citizenship only on the basis of their own application to be released from the state union, according to the amendment to the law, they lost it if they accepted the citizenship of another state, in the language of the law *“by acquiring foreign citizenship on the basis of explicit expression of will.”* This did not apply only in two cases, if they acquired another citizenship by marriage or it concerned the birth of a child. The consequence was also to be the abolition of the state-employment relationship, which required Slovak citizenship and the impossibility to become acquainted with classified materials.

Tempers flared in the Parliament. J. Slota and V. Mečiar spoke about the beginning of the war in Europe. *“Everyone wants just one thing. The greater Hungary, the liquidation, literally liquidation, of the Treaty of Trianon and this is the beginning of the military conflict in Central Europe. The political elites, who will rule in the Republic of Hungary for the next four years, will go further and stop at nothing.”* Slota said. Mečiar repeatedly called Orbán’s government Nazi. SDKÚ Chairman M. Dzurinda pointed out that a new minority of citizens will be formed in the south of Slovakia due to the unfortunate reaction to the Hungarian amendment.<sup>257</sup> In the parliamentary debate, Zs. Simon criticized the law adopted in Budapest for provoking nationalism and focusing on the Hungarian issue again. He confirmed that the members of Most-Híd (leaders) are not interested in Hungarian citizenship, unlike

256 *Aktuálne*, 25. 5. 2010, Parlament odmietol zákon o dvojakom občianstve.

257 *Pravda*, 27. 5. 2010, Jancová, D. Česka sa nový zákon nedotkne. The assumption that the law would not affect the Czech Republic was not fulfilled. By February 2018, 569 Slovak citizens lost their citizenship due to the acceptance of Czech citizenship.

the members of the SMK.<sup>258</sup> At the parliamentary meeting, the chairman of the SMK P. Csáky said that no citizen of the Slovak Republic of Hungarian nationality intends to renounce the citizenship of the Slovak Republic when applying for Hungarian citizenship.<sup>259</sup> P. Csáky accepted the Hungarian act on citizenship of foreign Hungarians, a similar attitude was confirmed during the negotiations with V. Orbán in Bratislava by the chairman of the SMK J. Berényi, who then applied for Hungarian citizenship on the first working day of 2011: *“We think it is a standard law also in other countries. Nothing strange is happening.”*<sup>260</sup> The leaders of the Hungarian political parties criticized the Slovak law, and the Hungarian law, which triggered the whole hysteria, was forgotten in the ongoing disputes. Representatives of the SMK quietly accepted it and expressed their support. Hungarian representatives of Most-Híd did not criticize its content, but the method of its adoption. They considered the Slovak law to be bad, unfortunately worded, directed against its own citizens.<sup>261</sup>

M. Dzurinda, the chairman of the SDKÚ, a party which did not vote for the law, pointed out the problematic nature of the Slovak act on citizenship: *“The law approved by our parliament is actually the implementation of the one approved in Budapest. It allows for the creation of a special minority, which will consist of citizens, nationals of the Republic of Hungary, however, at the same time they will not be citizens of the Slovak Republic. The more numerous this group is, the fewer inhabitants of the Slovak Republic there will be. The law I am talking about is also bad for those who want to apply for dual citizenship anywhere in the world. ... the Hungarian law will enter into force on 1 January next year, so there is still plenty of time for a political solution. The post-election political representation will therefore have room to adopt better legislation ... one that does not allow the effects of the law from Budapest, founded on an illegal basis and which is contrary to international law, to be applied also in our country. This law will refuse to apply the effects of the illegal Hungarian Act in Slovakia. ... We cannot expel our own citizens from the state and we cannot harm the Slovaks. I would have not believed that we would be dancing to the tune of Budapest.”*<sup>262</sup> With regard to the law, which was adopted as a countermeasure by the National Council of the Slovak Republic, M. Lajčák said that this is a standard European law, similar to the laws adopted in 11 European countries. The Hungarian law is not standard and no European country has such benevolent criteria for obtaining citizenship as Hungary. Minister of Foreign Affairs Lajčák also added a remark *“If we want to make symbolic gestures, we should give out diplomas, not passports.”*<sup>263</sup>

A serious consequence of the adoption of the Slovak Act on Citizenship was that the questionable extraterritorial Hungarian law was no longer discussed, but the

258 *Sme*, 27. 5. 2010, Kováčová, M. SMK chce dvojaké občianstvo, Most nie.

259 *Pravda*, 30. 5. 2010, Ficove vyjadrenia k maďarskému zákonu sú amatérske.

260 *Hospodárske noviny*, 16. 12. 2010. Orbán nás vynechal z hry.

261 *Webnoviny*, 26. 5. 2010, Zsolt Simon o maďarské občianstvo nepožiada; *Aktuality*, 26. 5. 2010, Dvojaké občianstvo: Odveta voči Maďarom je schválená!

262 *Aktuality*, 26. 5. 2010, Dvojaké občianstvo: Odveta voči Maďarom je schválená!

263 *Sme*, 30. 5. 2010, Lajčák: Ak chceme robiť symbolické gestá rozdávajme diplomy, nie pasy.

problem of the Slovak standard and its harshness towards their own citizens was addressed. This was the case both in Slovakia and in Hungary. Among the Hungarian elites in Slovakia, this trend was particularly pronounced, regardless of the ideological focus or organizational form. On May 31, 2010, RHS was critical of the Slovak law. In press releases, they worded their reservations,<sup>264</sup> which were later presented at a protest march in Bratislava. It was organized as a symbolic march “*From Petőfi to Štefánik*”, on 8 June 2010. The march was to “*symbolize the path to tolerance.*” At the same time, they expressed dissatisfaction with the Slovak amendment to the Act on Citizenship. “*This is not a protest, this is a gesture of goodwill expressing the solidarity of all Slovak citizens,*” said K. Petőcz, a spokesman for RHS, the Program Director of the Forum of the Institute for Minority Research, former Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to the UN in Geneva. According to him, both Slovakia and Hungary rightly refer to the European Convention on Citizenship, but each party takes out of it what suits their intentions. “*We fundamentally protest against the Slovak government - without any relevant reason – labelling a whole group of its citizens, participating in the creation of the spiritual and material wealth of the state, as a serious security risk*” for the Slovak Republic. Petőcz appreciated the television speech of President I. Gašparovič, who also addressed citizens of Hungarian nationality, but saw it as a gesture that should be followed by action. He reminded that the civic association RHS, together with the representatives of all historical national minorities, presented the President, at his request, with a particular initiative for changes in legislation concerning the rights of minorities. Activists proposed asking the General Attorney to initiate submission of an amendment to the Act on Citizenship, signed by the President of the Republic, to the Constitutional Court.<sup>265</sup>

As she told the Hungarian weekly *Heti Világgazdaság* in early July 2010, Prime Minister I. Radičová had the ambition, after taking the office, to declare the Hungarian law violating international treaties in Slovakia ineffective and at the same time repeal Fico’s amendment to the act on citizenship. Still, it was not possible to eliminate the effects of Hungarian law on Slovak territory by own legislation, because the effects of the national law of another state cannot be repealed, nor can such a law be applied. Deputy Prime Minister R. Chmel (Most-Híd) came up with the idea of concluding a bilateral agreement with Hungary, which determines the conditions for exercising dual citizenship.<sup>266</sup>

However, he did not find support for such an initiative on the other side of the border. The Hungarian side did not intend to amend or negotiate anything in their law and enthusiastically criticized the undemocratic Slovak retaliatory standard.

The government of I. Radičová also approved an amendment to the Civil Service Act, which introduced restrictions for holders of two passports. It prevented them from working in the positions of police officers, soldiers, customs officers, in the in-

264 <http://www.kerekasztal.org/sk/2010/05/vyhlasenie-okruhleho-stola-madarov-na-slovensku-k-situacii-po-prijati-novelizacie-zakona-o-obcianstve/>

265 *Sme*, 31. 5. 2010, Maďari budú pochodovať za toleranciu.

266 *Pravda*, 17. 8. 2010, Na dvojité občianstvo zatiaľ koalícii chýba recept.



formation services, at the National Security Office and in the state administration in positions where they would come into contact with confidential information. The restrictions were also to apply to those Slovak citizens who applied for a second citizenship.<sup>267</sup>

Even in Slovakia, during the government of I. Radičová, no agreement was reached in the coalition on the issue of dual citizenship, although the goal of “*eliminating the adverse effects of the current legislation*” appeared in the government’s programme statement. On 26 January 2011, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved a proposal prepared to amend the Slovak Act on Citizenship. This proposal included a provision according to which Slovakia does not recognize the acquisition of foreign citizenship if the citizen acquired it in violation of international law, customs and principles. The material approved by the government would simplify the acquisition of Slovak citizenship for people who lost it during the effectiveness of the “anti-law” of the previous government. Politicians from the KDH, as well as the parliamentary opposition, described such an arrangement as purely declaratory, as foreign laws do not apply in Slovakia anyway. The Chairman of the Constitutional Law Committee of the Parliament, R. Procházka from the KDH, stated that such a provision partially ridicules the Slovak legal system.<sup>268</sup> At the meeting of the National Council of the Slovak Republic in January 2011 on an amendment to the Act on Citizenship, according to which the “*citizenship of the Slovak Republic could be lost only by dismissal from the state union of the Slovak Republic at one’s own request*”, disputes arose in the government coalition. I. Matovič, at that time an MP for the SaS, refused to support the government proposal and submitted an amendment that made the legal norm more restrictive and was also supported by three MP from his platform OĽaNO, R. Procházka from the KDH and MP of the SNS and Smer. Following the approval of the amendment, the petitioners withdrew the original law from the session. The SaS subsequently expelled Matovič from their club. The original state remained in force.<sup>269</sup>

The writer of Hungarian nationality, P. Hunčík, commented on the situation during the government of I. Radičová: “*I may surprise you, but Fico could not do anything else then. He would be crazy not to adopt a strict law to represent the interest of the whole of Slovakia. It is much more disappointing that the then government was not able to do anything about it in thirteen months.*”<sup>270</sup>

Most-Híd challenged the Slovak Act on Citizenship before the Constitutional Court and demanded its repeal. The request was submitted by a group of 30 MP, led

267 *Webnoviny*, 26. 1. 2011, Vláda odmieta Ficov zákon o dvojakom občianstve.

268 *Webnoviny*, 26. 1. 2011, Vláda odmieta Ficov zákon o dvojakom občianstve.

269 *Denník N*, 5. 4. 2016, Most vzdal boj proti braniu pasov; *Webnoviny*, 22. 10. 2010, Vláda ustupuje Budapešti; *Postoj*, 15. 2. 2011, Radoslav Procházka a Ondrej Dostál o dvojakom občianstve, <https://www.postoj.sk/1938/nazor-radoslav-prochazka-a-ondrej-dostal-o-dvojakom-obcianstve>; *Teraz*, 17. 9. 2014, Ústavný súd zamietol..., <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/us-sr-zamietnutie-dvojake-obcianstvo/98342-clanok.html>; *Denník N*, 5. 4. 2016, Most vzdal boj proti braniu pasov; *Webnoviny*, 22. 10. 2010, Vláda ustupuje Budapešti.

270 *Sme*, 7. 1. 2012, Hrozí nám stret dvoch alfa samcov (rozhovor M. Piška s psychiatrom P. Hunčíkom).

by G. Gál, on 30 September 2011. They objected that, according to Article 5 of the Constitution, point 2, no one could be deprived of their citizenship against their will. On 4 June 2012, the Plenum of the Constitutional Court received another submission regarding the Act on Citizenship. The Constitutional Court rejected the request to suspend the effectiveness of certain articles of the Act. Delays in the decision of the Constitutional Court led to the actions of activists of Hungarian nationality. On 1 September 2012, L. Gubík (as a representative of the working group for the introduction of dual citizenship) organized a group of about 300 citizens who protested against the Act on Citizenship in front of the Constitutional Court building in Košice.<sup>271</sup> On 1 September 2013, about 100 people protested in front of the Constitutional Court. In January 2014, the Constitutional Court decided to adjourn the proceedings in this matter indefinitely. However, three years later, on 17 September 2014, the Constitutional Court was unable to decide whether the law was unconstitutional or not. Of the eleven constitutional judges, seven did not vote on the proposal. The prevailing view was that the court took an alibistic position when it did not make a clear decision as to whether this law was in accordance with the Constitution or not. One of the reasons was that the Constitutional Court did not have the full number of appointed judges, which was supposed to be 13.<sup>272</sup> In September 2014, P. Csáky also declared in Budapest that “*the Slovak Act on Citizenship is in conflict with the European Convention on Human Rights and fundamental freedoms, but also with several legal standards of the European Union*” and announced the attempt to refer the matter to the Court of Justice of the European Union. Csáky stated that it is outrageous how Slovakia approaches this matter, as well as the fact that, on the basis of an unclear law, they are depriving their own citizens of Slovak citizenship against their will.<sup>273</sup> Even on this occasion, he did not comment on whether the Hungarian law was in line with the standards he mentioned. Zoltán Lomnici (the former President of the Supreme Court), the chairman of the Hungarian civic organization for the protection of human rights Human Dignity Council, reacted in a similar way and confirmed they would contin-

271 In 2011, L. Gubík applied for Hungarian citizenship and lost his Slovak citizenship. According to information from the SMK spokeswoman H. Fialová, he was the head of the SMK Via Nova youth organization and ran for the Hungarian government party Fidesz in a symbolic 21<sup>st</sup> place in the 2014 European Parliament elections. “*This means that he only has this option to run for the European Parliament.*” she said when asked why he was running for Fidesz. L. Gubík was also the chairman of the SMK organization in Levice. (*Sme*, 16. 4. 2014, Krempaský, J. Šéf mládežníkov SMK kandiduje..., *Teraz*, 16. 4. 2014, Šéf mládežníkov v SMK kandiduje..., <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/sme-sef-mladeznikov-smk-kandiduje/81319-clanok.html>)

272 *Sme*, 17. 9. 2014, Ústavný súd odobranie občianstva...; *Teraz*, 13. 12. 2017, Most-Híd pandorinu skrinku neotvorí..., <https://aktualne.atlas.sk/slovensko/politika/most-hid-pandorinu-skrinku-neotvori-zakon-dvojakom-obcianstve-nebude-chieť-menit.html>; *Pravda*, 17. 9. 2014, Je odobranie pasov v poriadku?; *Teraz*, 17. 9. 2014, <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/dvojite-obcianstvo-ustava-sulad-ussr/98318-clanok.html>

273 *Teraz*, 26. 9. 2014, Zákon o občianstve v SR nie je v súlade s normami EÚ <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/p-csaky-zakon-o-obcianstve/99708-clanok.html>

ue fighting for the rights of Hungarians living in Slovakia who lost their Slovak citizenship after accepting the Hungarian one.<sup>274</sup>

On this occasion, it turned out that a range of views on the Slovak and Hungarian act on citizenship was formed. The representatives of Smer and the SNS rejected the Hungarian law and supported the Slovak legislation. The prevailing opinion in the Slovak right was that everyone has the right to accept the citizenship of another state (P. Zajac – KDĽ, M. Poliačik – SaS). The third opinion was represented by M. Beblavý (Siet') – a person has the right to dual citizenship, but citizenship should be bound to residence, work and should not be just given out, because it leads to international complications. The fourth opinion was shared by the SMK and also some representatives of Most-Híd. According this opinion, Hungarian law was acceptable, while Slovak law is unconstitutional. The Minister of Foreign Affairs informed that an expert group dealing with the law was set up at the Ministry and should submit a draft opinion by October 2014. He also stated that the European Court had ruled that the Slovak standard was in line with European law and standards and that Slovakia was not under pressure to make decisions quickly. *“We are talking about our citizens, we want to solve the situation.”*<sup>275</sup>

The civic associations Via Nova, Za lepšie Komárno (For Better Komárno), T.Ü.Kör a Hnutie za zachovanie maďarskej kultúry (the Movement for the Preservation of Hungarian Culture) announced the launch of a petition *“for the reintroduction of the possibility of dual citizenship”*. J. Berényi, Chairman of the SMK, also became a member of the petition committee. ON 1 September 2011, in support of the petition event, a meeting against the Slovak Act on Citizenship was organized by civic organizations in Komárno. Political scientists M. Kusý (at the invitation of J. Berényi) and G. Mesežnikov also spoke there. They criticized Fico's law, but they did not mention that Hungarian law was bad too, nor did the Hungarian speakers from the movement *Za zachovanie maďarskej identity* (For the preservation of Hungarian identity). K. Less spoke on behalf of *Za lepšie Komárno*, he also spoke at joint events with the Hungarian party Jobbik, where he fought for the restoration of the authority of St. Stephen's Crown in the Carpathian Basin and the unification of the Hungarian nation under its power. His speech also reflected a feature of Hungarian domestic policy, which described the opponents of official opinion as traitors hiding in the ranks of the nation.<sup>276</sup>

The problem of citizenship was inherited by Fico's second one-party government in 2012. At a meeting in June 2012, Ministers Martonyi and Lajčák admitted that the positions of both countries on the issue of citizenship had not converged. According

274 *Teraz*, 26. 9. 2014, Zákon o občianstve v SR nie je v súlade s normami EÚ <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/p-csaky-zakon-o-obciansstve/99708-clanok.html>; *Webnoviny*, 18. 4. 2014, Zastavte justičnú štvanicu proti Hedvige..., <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/813286-zastavte-justicnu-stvanicu-voci-hedvige-prosia-madari-kisku/>

275 *Teraz*, 17. 9. 2014, Ústavný súd zamietol..., <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/us-sr-zamietnutie-dvojake-obciansstvo/98342-clanok.html>;

276 *Hospodárske noviny*, 20. 8. 2011, Figeľ: Zákon o občianstve treba len zmeniť; *Sme*, 3. 9. 2011, Morvay, P. Nepoctivo o občianstve.

to Lajčák, the bilateral problem is the result of the fact that the Hungarian and Slovak acts on citizenship “*follow a different philosophy*”. “*We have a different interpretation of the relationship between the state and the citizen,*” Martonyi said. Lajčák confirmed that the Slovak Government is considering an amendment to the Act on Citizenship, but wanted to proceed cautiously and with regard to the decisions of the relevant authorities. “*We will take into account the decision of the Constitutional Court and all European standards.*” According to Martonyi, there is no point in arguing about an amendment, the wording of which is unknown. According to the Hungarian minister, two things are important: “*So that there is no tension between the two countries, which would affect other areas as well. And that no individual should feel injustice.*”<sup>277</sup>

In May 2013, opposition MP L. Žitňanská and D. Lipšic submitted an amendment to the Act on Citizenship to the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The journalist P. Morvay then wrote: “*For most of those who have unnecessarily lost Slovak citizenship and will lose in the future, it would be quite sufficient ... dual citizenship would allow anyone who applied for citizenship of another state on the basis of real residence, permanent residence in its territory. This would not solve the problem of members of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia who obtained or want to obtain Hungarian citizenship without living in Hungary. In any case, it would be a big step forward.*”<sup>278</sup> The opposition proposal did not pass in the Parliament.

R. Fico did not give up the idea of securing an agreement on the basis of an international treaty and with the help of foreign mediators (OSCE High Commissioner K. Vollebaek, who met with R. Fico on 10 October 2012). Despite the fact that the proposal submitted by the Slovak Republic was rejected several times by Budapest. In such a case, he relied on Slovakia to gain international support against Hungarian law, which was of extraterritorial nature.<sup>279</sup> However, this model of the solution was as unacceptable for the other side of the border, as it was in 2010 because it would disrupt one of the pillars of Orbán’s “national” policy across borders and the Slovak Hungarian elites did not even dare to think about it, let alone support it publicly. Hungary, as well as the representatives of Hungarian organizations in Slovakia, constantly maintained an atmosphere of injustice and hurt in connection with the Slovak Act on Citizenship. In February 2014, people who lost their Slovak citizenship because they accepted the Hungarian citizenship handed over a memorandum to the Government Office of the Slovak Republic. They demanded that “*they abolish the current unconstitutional situation as soon as possible, and that the state authorities will stop harassing Hungarian citizens deprived of their Slovak citizenship.*” The memorandum was signed by the former student, now a lawyer L. Gubík, priest Gy. Kassai or

277 *Pravda*, 2. 6. 2012, Zdanie klame, zhodli sa Lajčák s Martonyim.

278 *Sme*, 19. 6. 2013, Morvay, P. Bývalý spoluobčan Gavel.

279 *Teraz*, 11. 10. 2012, Nadobúdanie druhého občianstva..., <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/nadobudanie-druheho-obcianstva-treba/25036-clanok.html>; *Teraz*, 13. 1. 2013, Benešove dekréty sú nezmeniteľné a nezrušiteľné, <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/benesove-dekrety-fico-bugar/34415-clanok.html>

102-year-old former teacher I. Tamásová. The memorandum was prepared with the help of the Human Dignity Council, an “*organization with international membership*.”<sup>280</sup> They built on the premise that Hungarian law was justified, unquestionable. They especially emphasized the injustices of persons who lost their Slovak citizenship by acquiring Hungarian citizenship. Hungary also used this situation to promote unity and solidarity and abused feelings of guilt and injustice. People who dared to publicly declare their Hungarian citizenship were presented as heroes. Hungary introduced new rituals and awards to reward loyal Hungarians from abroad and motivate others to take bold action in favour of Hungary. L. Gubik, the chairman of Via nova youth organization, who publicly applied for Hungarian citizenship, gave comments on the situation and submitted an appeal with the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, later became the founder and currently the director of the Esterházy Academy in Martovce pri Komárne. There, with a rich contribution from the Hungarian Government Office and the Gábor Bethlen Foundation, which supports the activities of foreign Hungarians, he has built facilities supporting the ideas of a united Hungarian nation and has organized various educational courses and events promoting Hungarian culture and education in “*Felvidék*”. The motto of the academy is: “*Our vocation is Hungarian, our mission is European*” (“*Hivatásunk magyar, küldte téstünk evropai*”).<sup>281</sup> In August 2014, a former teacher from Rimavská Sobota, I. Tomásová, who lost her Slovak citizenship, was awarded a medal on the occasion of the Day of the Hungarian Constitution and King Stephen from the hands of the Speaker of the Parliament L. Kövér. On this occasion, Deputy Prime Minister Zs. Semjén emphasized that “*the Hungarian nation is a united nation that is indivisible.*” She received the Medal of Hungarian Honor already in 2012.<sup>282</sup>

The problem of citizenship remained on the table, but it was not possible to achieve a change in the National Council of the SR. The ruling Smer was not interested and the opposition parties did not have enough force to change and, additionally, they were not united on this issue. In this case, the Hungarians were not the main problem for the Slovak Government, as they did not claim the new citizenship in large numbers. A problem was the fact that many more Slovak citizens who accepted the citizenship of other states (especially the Czech Republic, Austria, Great Britain, Germany, USA and others) lost their Slovak citizenship. This was the reason why the Ministry of the Interior of the SR finally refined the law with a regulation that made it possible to apply for the return of citizenship to those who This was the reason why the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic finally softened the law with a regulation that made it possible to apply for the return of citizenship to those who lost it but also had

280 *Aktuálne*, 26. 2. 2014, Ľudia, ktorí stratili štátne občianstvo..., <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/ludia-ktori-stratili-slovenske-obcianstvo-odovzdali-ficovi-memorandum/slovensko/spolocnost/>; I. Tamásová was awarded the J. A. Komenský Memorial Medal in Slovakia as a teacher (*Sme*, 23. 1. 2014, Jesenský, M. Na občianstvo čaká aj storočná).

281 More information on the Academy’s website: <http://esterhazyakademia.eu/>

282 *Teraz*, 9. 8. 2014, Dôchodkyňa, ktorá prišla o občianstvo SR, v Maďarsku opäť ocenili, <http://www.teraz.sk/zahranicie/i-tamasova-madarsko-sr-ocenenie/95035-clanok.html>

a permanent residence in the new state. In this way, the original meaning of the law was to be preserved, so that Slovak Hungarians living in southern Slovakia would not acquire Hungarian citizenship. Therefore, from February 2015, the Ministry's regulation on granting citizenship of the Slovak Republic for special reasons was effective. It enabled the former citizens of the Slovak Republic who lost their Slovak citizenship after 1 January 1993 to be able to apply for its return. The decision on the application also took into consideration the facts that were the reason for the loss of citizenship of the Slovak Republic, and the manner and conditions in which the applicant obtained a foreign passport. *"Especially the existence of a condition of permitted, registered residence in a foreign state at the time of acquiring foreign citizenship."*<sup>283</sup> The possibility to return Slovak citizenship did not apply to those who continued to live in Slovakia and applied for citizenship due to "emotional attachment". The situation was discussed on 6 February 2015 in Budapest by the Prime Minister of Hungary V. Orbán, the Chairman of the SMK J. Berényi and the chairman of the largest cultural association Csemadok, Gy. Bárdos, as part of the *"regular contact and strategic cooperation"*. According to them, the new regulation of the Ministry of the Interior of the SR on granting citizenship of the Slovak Republic for special reasons did not bring any progress to Hungarians living in Slovakia.<sup>284</sup>

In 2015, the MP from the Hungarian movement Jobbik I. Szavay opened an office in Dunajská Streda and justified it by the existence of Hungarian citizens and voters in the city. Not only Fidesz, who had the opportunity to promote their party through state subsidies, grant schemes, state television, funding of education and culture, radio and the press, but also other parties in Hungary wanted to gain the support of compatriots. This caused outrage in Slovakia, one can say in the whole political spectrum. The President of the Slovak Parliament demanded him to close the office immediately. The Chairman of Most-Híd B. Bugár also perceived the news about the opening of the office negatively.<sup>285</sup> A few months before the parliamentary elections in Slovakia, the thesis that nationalists on both sides needed each other was only confirmed. In a poll of politicians conducted by the daily Sme, only Milan Kňažko found a place for both parties to the conflict in a brief answer *"It's a bad law that responds to another bad law."*<sup>286</sup>

283 *Denník N*, 5. 4. 2016, Most vzdal boj proti braniu pasov; *Sme*, 4. 4. 2016, Zákon o občianstve pripravil o pas..., <http://domov.sme.sk/c/20130202/zakon-o-obciansstve-pripravil-o-slovensky-pas-doteraz-1331-ludi.html#ixzz44pwpSu7E>; *Teraz*, 26. 2. 2018, (TASR). Zákon o štátnom občianstve pripravil doteraz o pas 2183 ľudí.

284 *Teraz*, 7. 2. 2015, Orbán rokoval o situácii Maďarov v SR..., <http://www.teraz.sk/zahranicie/orban-smk-rokovanie-csemadok/119121-clanok.html>

285 *Sme*, 15. 10. 2015, Kopcsay, M. Jobbik v Strede.

286 *Sme*, 11. 2. 2014, Otázka dňa. The other participants in the survey either did not respond or wanted to revise the Slovak law in some way. The questionnaire concerned Slovak law. The question was: *"Should Slovakia take away the citizenship of people who have accepted the citizenship of another country?"* J. Berényi was in favour of change, but he did not specify what he would change. He replied: *"Current legislation should be changed urgently so that people do not lose their citizenship against their will."*

On the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Basic Agreement, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council of the SR, F. Šebej, Member of Parliament for Most-Híd, appreciated the great contribution of the Agreement to Slovak-Hungarian relations. He also reminded that Hungary had breached the Agreement by not consulting Slovakia with regard to a law that has simplified the granting of dual citizenship to foreign Hungarians since 2011. He rejected this step by Hungary, but also the exaggerated Slovak reaction in the form of a law that withdraws Slovak passport from citizens after accepting another citizenship.<sup>287</sup> In 2016, Most-Híd became part of the government coalition but did not submit a proposal to change the Act on Citizenship. It was not even included in the programme statement.<sup>288</sup> In coalition with Smer and the SNS, the reasons are clear. The problem would lead to a conflict in the governing coalition, and it would be in the interest of the governing coalition to avoid possible disputes.

However, in early 2016, opposition MP from SaS O. Dostál, M. Poliačik and P. Osuský submitted a proposal to the Parliament to amend the Act on Citizenship in the same wording as did Most-Híd in 2014. In the explanatory statement, they said: *“The submitted proposal addresses the problem of withdrawal of citizenship systematically and restores the original legal status existing until 16 July 2010, when the only form of loss of citizenship was release from the state union at one’s own request.”*<sup>289</sup> In an open letter, Dostál called on Bugár to support the change of law.<sup>290</sup> The representatives of Smer and the SNS had already announced that they would perceive such a step unfavourably. Most-Híd did not support the law, arguing that they did not want to break the coalition agreement, that no problematic and unresolved issues should be raised. At the same time, they did not want to jeopardize the possible support of coalition partners on the important issue of establishing a Fund for the Support of Minority Culture.<sup>291</sup> The amendment proposal that would allow the return of Slovak citizenship to people who lost it due to the acceptance of other citizenship, was submitted by the representatives of the opposition to the National Council of the SR also in March 2017. Government party Most-Híd voted together with the opposition in favour of the motion, however, the proposal only received 66 votes out of 146.<sup>292</sup>

287 *Teraz*, 13. 3. 2015, Základná zmluva by mohla riešiť aj štátne občianstvo, <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/f-sebej-zakladna-zmluva-by-mohla-ri/124893-clanok.html>

288 *Teraz*, 13. 12. 2017, Most-Híd pandorinu skrinku neotvori..., <https://aktualne.atlas.sk/slovensko/politika/most-hid-pandorinu-skrinku-neotvori-zakon-dvojakom-obciansvte-nebude-chciet-menit.html>

289 <http://www.topky.sk/cl/100535/1538295/SaS-chce-menit-zakon-o-pomoc-ziada-Most-Hid-Simon-je-rad-ze-nemusi-hlasovat-tak--ako-chce-Smer>

290 *Denník N*, 5. 4. 2016, Most vzdal boj proti braniu pasov.

291 *Aktuálne*, 5. 5. 2016, Nehlasovaním o občianstve sa Most opäť demaskoval, <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/slovensko/politika/komentar-mariana-balazsa-nehlasovanim-obciansvte-most-opat-demaskoval.html>

292 *Teraz*, 13. 12. 2017, Most-Híd pandorinu skrinku neotvori..., <https://aktualne.atlas.sk/slovensko/politika/most-hid-pandorinu-skrinku-neotvori-zakon-dvojakom-obciansvte-nebude-chciet-menit.html>

On 27 April 2017, the head of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic, I. Federič, submitted to the Government a draft government regulation establishing civil service positions where a citizen of the Slovak Republic may perform civil service. The reason was the adoption of the new Act No. 55/2017 Coll. on Civil Service. Therefore, it was necessary to issue new legal regulations, including regulation of the Government of the SR, which establishes civil servant positions where only a Slovak citizen can perform civil service. It was a technical matter, the law did not extend the positions concerned, nor did it specifically mention Hungarian citizenship. There were not enough votes even in the opposition to make radical changes in the act on citizenship in Slovakia. B. Bugár considered the possible cooperation between the SMK and I. Matovič and his OĽaNO as a “deadly kiss” from the point of view of the SMK, which he justified by the fact that I. Matovič opposed the dual citizenship that was in the program of the SMK.<sup>293</sup>

Citizenship acts on both sides caused deterioration of relations. By means of the Act on Citizenship, V. Orbán fulfilled the basic aim of creating the institutional conditions for his cross-border Hungarian policy by enabling Hungarians abroad, to acquire Hungarian citizenship, if they wish to do so. Hungarian citizenship is connected to the declaration of Hungarian ethnicity and knowledge of the Hungarian language, together with the condition of belonging of a citizen of a neighbouring state or their ancestors to the territory of historic Hungary. From a “technical” point of view, the problem of dual citizenship is a consequence of the division of Hungary and follows on this division. In terms of time, there may be the case of a person who has never lived in Hungary. After almost a hundred years, Hungary opened the issue of succession of citizenship unilaterally, without attempting to negotiate with the successor (breakaway) states and without an international agreement with its neighbours.

He later fulfilled the goal, confirmed by the constitution, that Hungary takes over, albeit (so far) only virtually, the responsibility for every Hungarian. With the legal solution that allowed for such residents to lose their citizenship, Slovakia also created the conditions for such a resident of Slovakia, without Slovak citizenship, to be taken over by the Hungarian state. The fact that there were only 101 of those who accepted Hungarian citizenship and declared it publicly by 22 February 2018 does not mean that there cannot be more in the future. From a political point of view, the simplification of the acquisition of citizenship was a gesture and a symbol of national compassion with foreign Hungarians. *“It was also a political calculation aimed at strengthening power in the long run.”*<sup>294</sup>

The Hungarian Act on Citizenship is not about the application of human and civil rights of Hungarians. It is a law on the fulfilment of the Hungarian national policy, on the political and national and state interests of the Hungarian representations in order to compensate for the lost historical illusions. A person is in the very last place. The law is bad, non-European, based on the principles of nationalism, hiding behind

293 *Denník N*, 23. 11. 2017, Ak ma neporazí, budem ešte kandidovať (rozhovor M. Tódovej s B. Bugárom).

294 SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. Fragments of the National Policy of Hungarian Governments...



Hungarian patriotism and the protection of the Hungarian nation. All reactions and responses to this law, on the other hand, cannot be good, they are just bad or worse. The Slovak one was the worst.

Despite serious objections to the Hungarian Act on Citizenship, it must be said that the Slovak response to this law showed serious deficits not only in the search for consensual measures of the Slovak political elite, hidden anti-Hungarian nationalism but especially a fundamental deficit of conceptual political thinking and elaborate minority policy. The state cannot get rid of its citizen at the sign of first problems, the state must take care of the citizen for a long time and, if necessary, the state has a duty to fight for its citizen, it must defend him, against any negative influences, whether economic or political, against domestic or foreign influences.

Instead of fighting for their citizen of Hungarian nationality, Slovakia has drafted a law on how to deprive them of their citizenship. Instead of a systematic conceptual nationality, minority policy that would attract a Slovak Hungarian to the Slovak Republic, Slovakia sought pretexts and created combinations (textbooks, geographical names, language law, citizenship) that directed them to the Hungarian national policy.

## Ethnic Political Parties in Slovakia 2004 – 2018

One of the ways in which national minorities can promote their interests is the creation of an ethnic political party. Ethnic political parties are characterized by their focus on defending the interests of a certain ethnic group.<sup>295</sup> The legal order of the Slovak Republic does not exclude the existence of ethnic parties that are explicitly focused on representing the interests of a national minority or several national minorities. The full list of officially registered political parties is available in the register of political parties at the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic.<sup>296</sup> According to Horowitz, an ethnic political party is a political formation oscillating between a classical political party and an interest group that receives support from a particular ethnic group and serves their interests.<sup>297</sup> Some authors are inclined to use the term ethnic-regional political party. They define an ethnic-regional party as a party that primarily reflects internal regional boundaries and only secondarily represents the exclusive group identity. However, according to V. Hloušek and L. Kopeček, it is inaccurate to interchange both groups, because not every regional party has an ethnic base and not every ethnic party must necessarily be a regional party.<sup>298</sup> The term ethnic party leaves aside the territorial dimension of these parties and focuses primarily on the representation of ethnic rather than regional identity. However, there is no generally accepted definition of ethnic political parties, and we can encounter various definitions of these party-political entities in the professional literature.<sup>299</sup>

After 1989, three main political parties which were to promote the interests of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia were gradually formed. After 1989, *Maďarská nezávislá iniciatíva/Független Magyar Kezdeményezés* (Hungarian Independent Initiative), since 1992 known under the name *Maďarská občianska strana/ Magyar Polgári Párt* (Hungarian Civic Party), *Maďarské kresťansko-demokratické hnutie/Magyar Kereszténydemokrata Mozgalom* (Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement) and *Együttélés-Spolužitie* (Coexistence) movement, were represented in most municipalities in southern Slovakia, and most of the time they also had their representatives in the Parliament. Other ethnic political parties, which were formed after 1989, played only a marginal role in the political life of the Hungarian minority in

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295 HLOUŠEK, V. – KOPEČEK, L. *Politické strany. Původ, ideologie a transformace politických stran v západní a střední Evropě*. Praha: Grada Publishing, a. s., 2010, p. 236.

296 Report on the Status and Rights of Members of National Minorities for 2012, p. 60.

297 FIALA, P. – STRMISKA, M. *Etnické strany, zájmové skupiny a etnické minority. Příspěvek k politologické reflexi problému reprezentace a prosazování zájmů etnických menšin v pluralitních demokraciích*. In *Středoevropské politické studie – Central European Political Studies Review* 2002, Vol. 4, No. 4. <https://journals.muni.cz/cepsr/article/view/3915/5354>

298 HLOUŠEK, V. – KOPEČEK, L. *Politické strany. Původ, ideologie a transformace ...*, p. 236.

299 FIALA, P. – STRMISKA, M. *Etnické strany, zájmové skupiny a etnické minority...*

Slovakia.<sup>300</sup> Before the 1994 elections, the three parties managed to reach a mutual consensus and entered the elections together as Maďarská koalícia/Magyar koalíció (Hungarian Coalition). However, each party presented its own election program before the election. Their coalition agreement was based on an equal partnership. Maďarská koalícia won 10.18 % of the total submitted votes and thus showed a more positive result than the parties in the 1992 elections.<sup>301</sup>

### **SMK/MKP – Strana maďarskej koalície/Magyar Koalíció Pártja/ Hungarian Coalition Party**

### **Strana maďarskej komunity/Magyar Közösség Pártja/ Hungarian Community Party**

There were several reasons for the establishment of the SMK as the only political representative of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. One of them was an amendment to the electoral law prepared by the government of V. Mečiar, which made it difficult to form pre-election coalitions and stipulated that each party in the coalition had to exceed the 5 % threshold for the coalition to win parliamentary seats. The reform of the electoral law forced the representatives of Hungarian political parties in Slovakia to their unification, which, in political practice, proved to be an ideal integration step to promote interests on ethnic principles. At the same time, this unified the fragmented political and ideological directions into one stream, with ethnicity playing a dominant role, which has thus become the dominant characteristic feature of the SMK.<sup>302</sup> The ideological and programme identity of the SMK has been, as with its predecessors, primarily based on ethnicity. At the time of the party's establishment, a moderate ethnic focus and agenda prevailed. *“Other elements of its identity – Christian democratic, social liberal, conservative – were less significant, although they gave the party a certain centre-right touch.”*<sup>303</sup>

In the 1998 elections, the party won 9.12 % of the votes and won 15 seats in the National Council of the Slovak Republic. After the elections, the SMK became part of the government of M. Dzurinda.<sup>304</sup> Their participation in the government probably also had an impact on the relatively fast and smooth course of homogenization

300 ÖLLÖS, L. Programy maďarských strán. In FAZEKAS, J. – HUNČÍK, P. (eds.). *Maďari na Slovensku (1989 – 2004)*. Šamorín: Fórum inštitút pre výskum menšín, 2008, p. 62.

301 LABUDA, D. Maďarské politické strany na Slovensku v parlamentných voľbách v rokoch 1990 – 2006. In ŠUTAJ, Š. a kol. *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku po roku 1989*. Prešov: Universum 2008, p. 69.

302 GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ, O. Politické strany v spoločnosti – ich vnímanie a hlavné trendy volebného správania. In GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ, O. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. (eds.). *Vláda strán na Slovensku: skúsenosti a perspektívy*. Bratislava: IVO, 2004, p. 116, 121; STENA, J. Voľby a voliči 1998: Rozpad mýtov. In GBÚROVÁ, M. (ed.). *Voľby 1998 v Slovenskej republike (stav – kontexty – perspektíva)*. Prešov: Katedra sociálno-politologických vied FF PU, 1998, p. 132-141.

303 KOPEČEK, L. *Politické strany na Slovensku 1989 až 2006...*, p. 479.

304 ÖLLÖS, L. Programy maďarských strán. In FAZEKAS, J. – HUNČÍK, P. (eds.). *Maďari na Slovensku (1989 – 2004)...*, p. 64-65.

in SMK. Because of the benefits of the SMK's participation in the governing coalition, it would have been irrational for the SMK elites to promote the original political concepts and raise confrontational issues within the party in the given situation.<sup>305</sup> Unlike its predecessors, the SMK's coalition potential obviously increased, which was mainly related to the confrontation between the Mečiar and anti-Mečiar caMP. The addition of the SMK to the anti-Mečiar camp created the conditions for the SMK to remain an accepted coalition partner for a large number of Slovak political parties, even after the decline of the importance of the conflict between the Mečiar and anti-Mečiar line.<sup>306</sup>

In the elections in 2002, the SMK won 11.16 % of the vote and won 20 seats in parliament. In the 2002 – 2006 election period, the SMK was also part of the government coalition led by Prime Minister M. Dzurinda.<sup>307</sup> It was in the 2002 parliamentary elections that, for the first time, a more significant factor of the support of ethnically Slovak voters for the SMK became apparent. Sociologist V. Krivý interpreted this as a consequence of the inclination of some former voters of non-Hungarian government parties from the first Dzurinda's Government to the SMK as the most decisive supporter of reforms in the government.<sup>308</sup> With regard to the SMK's position, it should be noted that in the following periods, in the spirit of remembrance optimism, the party still emphasized the important role it played in stabilizing the political situation in Slovakia before 2006.<sup>309</sup>

The important role that the SMK played in the defeat of "Mečiarism" really should be recognised. It was actually reflected in the acceptance by the Slovak democratic public, and even in the support of the Slovak voter.

At the same time, however, the SMK was not satisfied with the fact that during their tenure in the government, they failed to adopt a law on the status of minorities, or a law on the financing of the cultures of national minorities, a satisfactory law on the use of the language of national minorities or the fact that even EU membership did not bring about the abolition of the "Beneš Decrees".<sup>310</sup>

Only the parliamentary elections in 2006 brought a change in the position of the SMK on the Slovak political scene. Although the SMK won 11.68 % of the votes in the election, the party was in the opposition after eight years. Subsequently, the party leadership changed and P. Csáky became the chairman of the SMK. He succeeded

305 KOPEČEK, L. Politické strany na Slovensku 1989 až 2006..., p. 468-469.

306 KOPEČEK, L. Politické strany na Slovensku 1989 až 2006..., p. 479-480.

307 ÖLLÖS, L. Programy maďarských strán. In FAZEKAS, J. – HUNČÍK, P. (eds.). *Maďari na Slovensku (1989 – 2004)*..., p. 64-65; GBÚROVÁ, M. Komparácia volebných programov SMK v rokoch 2002 a 2006. In ŠUTAJOVÁ, J. – ĎURKOVSKÁ, M. (eds.). *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku v procesoch transformácie po roku 1989 (Historické, politologické a právne súvislosti)*. Prešov: Universum, 2007, p. 62-75.

308 KOPEČEK, L. Politické strany na Slovensku 1989 až 2006..., p. 481.

309 Volebný program SMK na roky 2006 – 2010. [http://www.niton.sk/documents/10-8-639-val-prog\\_n\\_sk.doc](http://www.niton.sk/documents/10-8-639-val-prog_n_sk.doc)

310 Volebný program SMK na roky 2006 – 2010. [http://www.niton.sk/documents/10-8-639-val-prog\\_n\\_sk.doc](http://www.niton.sk/documents/10-8-639-val-prog_n_sk.doc)

B. Bugár, who has led the SMK since its foundation in June 1998. The election of the new leader took place at the congress in Komárno on 31 March 2007. P. Csáky received only 12 more votes than his opponent.<sup>311</sup> There were several causes for the changes in the leadership of the party. One of the reasons was the effort for internal change, after the long time when B. Bugár was the leader of the SMK. Some party members, especially in the south of central and eastern Slovakia, were of the opinion that the SMK did not do enough for the poorest areas during their time in the government. There was also a sense of injustice that most positions in the party were held by party members from western Slovakia. SMK district organization from Trebišov was one of those who stood up for Csáky, or M. Duray.<sup>312</sup>

Significant changes in the leadership of the party were foreshadowed by the new position of M. Duray. While B. Bugár publicly declared that he wanted to restrict his influence, P. Csáky offered him the position of party vice-chairman. Another important factor was the way in which P. Csáky conducted the campaign, when he suggested, both before and after the congress, that Bugár's leadership was under the influence of the economic lobby of O. Világi, the owner of many important companies both in Slovakia and abroad and the founder of the social-liberal MNI.<sup>313</sup>

B. Bugár repeatedly criticized the party's new leadership. In particular, he criticized the way in which important domestic policy issues were discussed: e.g. the "Beneš's Decrees", the issue of compensating the Hungarians for the events after the Second World War, but also the way in which the party's leadership changed. The conflict between M. Duray and B. Bugár escalated after M. Duray told the weekly *Magyar Fórum* that B. Bugár he had been trying to eliminate him since 1990. At that time, B. Bugár allegedly received an assignment from a former ŠtB (State Security) agent to prevent Duray's election as the head of the faction in the Federal Assembly. This agent was allegedly the chief adviser to MKDH. According to the daily *Sme*, historian P. Püspöki Nagy, registered as an agent of the ŠtB, worked as an advisor to MKDH at that time.<sup>314</sup> Mr Duray already had to explain these statements to the party's Board. B. Bugár vehemently denied M. Duray's accusations. He explained Duray's non-election by agreements between Spolužitie and MKDH and blamed Duray for disintegrating the party and not fulfilling his role of the SMK's programme vice-chairman, not convening the committee and not working on the SMK's programme strategy. He also asked the party's chairman, P. Csáky, to remedy the situation.<sup>315</sup>

Within the SMK, the new leadership headed by P. Csáky, consolidated their position. It can be said that the borders between the former Hungarian parties (Spolužitie,

311 *Nový čas*, 1. 4. 2007, Csáky: Slová Bugára sú prejavom ľudského sklamanie z neúspechu.

312 *Týždeň*, 2007, č. 16, Bán, A. Zabudnutí Maďari.

313 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2007. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2008, p. 99-100; *Nový čas*, 1. 4. 2007, Csáky: Slová Bugára sú prejavom ľudského sklamanie z neúspechu.

314 *Týždeň*, 2007, č. 16, Vrenie v SMK.

315 *Hospodárske noviny*, 16. 7. 2007, Ak nebude Duraya riešiť Csáky, bude Bugár konať sám.

MKDH, Maďarská občianska strana), which merged into the SMK in 1998,<sup>316</sup> were gradually blurred. These were mainly the differences between the conservative, ethnically oriented and the Christian-Democratic wing of the party. The positions of supporters of the MNI and later of the Maďarská občianska strana weakened significantly.<sup>317</sup>

Despite the historically and traditionally important electoral background, the social democratic direction did not manifest itself in the party. Gradually, a nationally oriented group, represented mainly by M. Duray, leaning towards the right-wing Hungarian party Fidesz, gained a decisive role in the party, which was reflected in the party's progress in the domestic and foreign policy. Its policy was based on ethnic topics with a clear focus on the Hungarian national policy of a united Hungary.

In the opposition, when the SMK freed itself from responsibility for the development in Slovakia, the SMK, with renewed courage, embarked on the issues ("Beneš's Decrees", autonomy, shortcomings in respecting the rights of national minorities), which they did not address as the governing party in order not to upset the fragile coalition consensus. Due to the manner of their policy implementation, the new leadership of the SMK also got into conflict with the former coalition allies SDKÚ-DS and especially the KDH, which accused the new leadership of the SMK of radicalism and escalation of tensions in society, by their reckless presentation of undiscussed topics. The chairman of the KDH, P. Hrušovský, suggested observing the policy of the SMK and, if it was anti-Slovak or would seek the autonomy of southern Slovakia, to limit contact with the representatives of the SMK.<sup>318</sup>

Personal conflicts between the members of the party gradually began to escalate. The main participants in these disputes were B. Bugár and his wing on one side and P. Csáky and M. Duray on the other. Mr Bugár initially rejected the idea of establishing a new political party defending the interests of the Hungarian minority.<sup>319</sup> Problems in the party resulted in the departure of Zs. Simon from the SMK and from the parliamentary group in April 2009. He was followed by 19 members of the SMK from the district of Levice. Subsequently, B. Bugár, L. Nagy and G. Gál announced their resignation from the SMK parliamentary group, but they remained members of the party and B. Bugár continued to reject claims about the formation of a new political party. Many members started leaving the party in this situation, or demanded the return of B. Bugár to the leadership. Three dissatisfied MP who left the parliamentary group came up with a proposal to create a special platform in the party, however,

316 On 28 February 2008 in Lučenec, the leader of the Hungarian opposition party Fidesz, Viktor Orbán, described the merger of three Hungarian parties in Slovakia into the SMK in 1998 as an heroic act (*Sme*, 28. 2. 2008, Viktor Orbán: Založit' SMK bolo hrdinstvo.).

317 From the leadership of the former MOS, the Presidency of the SMK only included J. Berényi, R. Hamerlík and B. Angyal, in addition to them, also L. Gyurovszky (for the Šaľa district) in the Republican Council. ([http://www.smk.sk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=38](http://www.smk.sk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=38))

318 *Pravda*, 14. 5. 2007, Hrušovský: Palkove slová sú o súťaži v KDH.

319 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2007...*, p. 100-102.

it was also rejected. Unsuccessful negotiations resulted in four MP of the National Council of the Slovak Republic (the fourth was the mayor of Komárno T. Bastrnák) leaving the SMK, which happened on 7 June 2009. They were joined by 3 members of the Board of the Republic, 18 members of the Republic Council, 32 members of regional councils, nine MP from the local government, seven district chairmen of the SMK and 24 mayors elected for the SMK.<sup>320</sup> At the beginning of July 2009, the Ministry of the Interior registered a new political party, Most-Híd. The founders of the party characterized the party as a party of Slovak-Hungarian understanding and cooperation open to all citizens of Slovakia.<sup>321</sup>

After the failure of the SMK in the parliamentary elections in 2010, there were significant changes in the leadership of the party. P. Csáky resigned as chairman and was temporarily replaced by J. Berényi. The latter subsequently gained support at the congress and became the next chairman of the SMK. I. Farkaš, L. Miklós, L. Szigeti, Péter Óry and T. Neszmeri became vice-presidents of the party and Gy. Bárdos became the new chairman of the Republic Council of the SMK. The objective of the party leadership was to get the SMK back to parliament. However, at least “temporarily” the party shifted the focus of their activities to the regional and municipal policy. The new chairman of the SMK J. Berényi also ruled out any merger with Most-Híd, in particular, because the party was described as a “mixed party”.<sup>322</sup> Another significant change was the change of the party’s name to Strana maďarskej komunity/ Magyar Közösség Pártja (Party of the Hungarian Community). This was justified by the fact that the term “coalition” does not correspond to reality, as the party no longer works as a coalition, but as a unified political party. This change was also related to the modernization of the party, prompted by another failure of the SMK in the parliamentary elections in 2012, after which the party remained outside the door of the National Council of the Slovak Republic again. Not only the name but also the statutes of the party and the logo were to change.<sup>323</sup> During this period, the first negotiations since the establishment of Most-Híd began between the leaders of both parties. Similarly to all the following negotiations that took place between the parties before almost every election in which they took part, this first negotiation was unsuccessful. Although before every election both parties always publicly declared their efforts to agree and cooperate, the program differences but also personal animosities between political representatives from the highest but also lower party structures proved to be problematic. There

320 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2009. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 2010*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2010, p. 89-91.

321 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2009...*, p. 100.

322 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2010. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 2011*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky 2011, p. 99-100.

323 *Hospodárske noviny*, 23. 4. 2012, SMK zmení logo a možno aj šéfa.

was only the exception of the isolated common candidates for the municipal elections, in which the lower party structures searched for coalition partners.<sup>324</sup>

The SMK entered the parliamentary elections in 2016 with the *Common Will* election program. There was a new element in the form of representatives of various social organizations, civic activists and other political movements on the list of candidates. *“The problem is that these ‘independents’, such as candidates from Csemadok or the Via Nova youth organization, are usually also members of the SMK. Such as Gyula Bárdos, chairman of the Csemadok cultural association and member of the SMK board. The so-called independent civic activists are also closely linked to the party.”*<sup>325</sup>

After the unsuccessful parliamentary elections in 2012, J. Berényi defended the position of the chairman, or rather no one ran against him, although originally the former chairman of the SMK P. Csáky was also supposed to run.<sup>326</sup> After the SMK failed in the parliamentary elections in 2016, J. Berényi resigned. In June 2016, J. Menyhárt was elected chairman of the SMK at the congress in Nové Zámky. Originally, P. Öry also ran for the chairman, but eventually withdrew his candidacy at the congress. He then became the chairman of SMK’s Republic Council.<sup>327</sup> Although the party did not change the program after the election, in addition to the direction towards V. Orbán, their new line included a policy focused on broader groups of the Hungarian community, cooperation with civic associations and the third sector, which it announced in the election campaign.

At the congress, the party presidency was rejuvenated, especially by people from the regions, who were lesser-known but had experience in municipal politics. This created the conditions for the gradual generational exchange that would allow for future cooperation with Most-Híd, or other parties that emerged later. However, the participation of Most-Híd in the government coalition with Smer-SD and the SNS became an insurmountable barrier to closer cooperation.

The program issues in the activities of the SMK for the following period were addressed by SMK’s Republic Council in Zemné in the Nové Zámky district in August 2017. For the period 2017 – 2022, they set the most important task of *“securing the effective representation of the interests of the inhabitants of South Slovakia in regional councils”*. They drew attention to the unfavourable economic situation in the southern and south-eastern districts, to the wrong agricultural policy and to the depopu-

324 *Sme*, 7. 6. 2012, SMK zrejme bude Strana maďarskej komunity.

325 *Denník N*, 19. 2. 2016, Morvay P. SMK ide o život.

326 *Sme*, 10. 12. 2012, Berényi obhájil post predsedu SMK.

327 *Aktuálne.sk*, 11. 6. 2016, SMK vyrazí do boja s novým lídrom. Neznámym Menyhártom. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/slovensko/politika/smk-vyrazi-do-boja-novym-lidrom-ten-vzide-z-duelu-neznamych.html>; J. Menyhárt was one of the lesser-known personalities in Slovak politics, he was a musician, a university teacher, the chairman of the SMK district organization in Dunajská Streda and a deputy of the self-governing region. (*Denník N*, 15. 6. 2016. Morvay, P. Prečo Maďarov kauza Bašternák nezaujima.)



lation of the countryside.<sup>328</sup> In Slovakia, the SMK was ideologically, personally and financially connected to Orbán's cross-border policy of a united Hungarian nation.

### Most-Híd

Most-Híd was founded by five former MP for the SMK, B. Bugár, G. Gál, Zs. Simon, L. Nagy and T. Bastrnák. The mayor of Veľké Raškovce E. Jakab and later MP L. Solymos and P. Vörös were also members of the preparatory committee of the new party. In the first phase, 57 SMK officials at various levels of the party hierarchy left the party. Bugár initially intended his own platform in the party, but he soon resigned. In May 2009, he denied the information of the party's chairman P. Csáky that they were just millimetres from an agreement with his typically ironic comment that Csáky had confused milometers and meters.<sup>329</sup> The Ministry of the Interior registered the party on 3 July 2009, after its representatives submitted 28,139 signatures. As B. Bugár had said before the establishment of the party, the party was to be built on a civic, not an ethnic principle, and provide space for several Slovak personalities.<sup>330</sup> *"The new party had a subtitle the "cooperation party" in order to erase the ethnic border and create a "bridge" between the Slovak majority on the one hand and the Hungarian minority, but also other ethnic minorities (the Roma, Ruthenians, Germans) on the other."*<sup>331</sup> Already in July 2009, the inaugural assembly of Most-Híd took place. Personnel issues of the party were addressed during the first session. B. Bugár was elected the chairman of the new party, R. Chmel, Zs. Simon and E. Pfundtner were elected the vice-chairmen. The program of the new political party was approved only at the second assembly of the party. In this context, B. Bugár stated that Most-Híd does not claim the position of the second Hungarian party and that its program is rather right-wing and does not contain the idea of autonomy. The party gradually built its regional and district structures, even in areas with few or no ethnic Hungarians. The party also focused on the Slovak voter, which is also evidenced by the fact that they tried to balance the proportion of Hungarian and Slovak representatives in the highest positions in the party. At the third assembly of the party, I. Švejna was elected as another vice-chairman.<sup>332</sup>

328 *Teraz*, 26. 8. 2017, Podľa SMK bude mať koaličná kríza ťažko predvídateľné následky. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/podla-smk-bude-mat-koalicka-kriza/277333-clanok.html>

329 *Aktuálne*, 25. 5. 2009, Bugárovi nebudú viac s Csáky m rokovať. Je koniec.

330 *Webnoviny*, 11. 7. 2014, Jakubčo, J. Zmenilo sa ovzdušie, tvrdí Bugár po piatich rokoch Mosta-Híd. <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/843836-zmenilo-sa-ovzdušie-tvrdi-bugar-po-piatich-rokoch-mosta-hid/>; *Pravda*, 10. 6. 2009, Smer chváli Bugára, SDKÚ stojí za Csáky m; *Teraz*, 18. 3. 2015, V bratislavskom Moste-Híd sa údajne chystajú odchody. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/politika-v-bratislavskom-moste-hid-sa/125502-clanok.html>.

331 GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ, O. – KRIVÝ, V. Vzorce volebného správania. In KRIVÝ, V. (ed.). *Ako sa mení slovenská spoločnosť*. Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV, 2013, p. 277.

332 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BŮTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2009...*, p. 100.

What was Most-Híd like? With regard to ethnicity, there was no dispute about whether it was exclusively Hungarian, as it was not, although B. Bugár and the group of leavers from the SMK clearly had a leading role in it. The ideological continuity did not follow on the original Christian orientation of B. Bugár's central figure but carried an element of the liberalist spirit of *Maďarská občianska strana* (Hungarian Civic Party). This was also indicated by the "silent" support of groups around O. Világi, publisher L. Szigeti, K. Tóth, L. Nagy and others. It was the combination of the civic principle of policy-making (rule of law, justice and equality...), liberal ideas, with the idea of consensual coexistence, and also the defence of the rights and status of national minorities, and marginalized groups, that created the conditions for cooperation with one line of Slovak policy, which was not covered adequately in the existing political parties at the time. It was more than obvious that B. Bugár was not a typical representative of this line of politics. B. Bugár was a pragmatic politician who needed political coverage in politics, corresponding with his ambitions and political practice to date. The designation Hungarian-Slovak is problematic for two reasons. Slovak politicians, who joined Most-Híd and played an important role in it, never profiled themselves as representatives of Slovak national ideas, but as representatives of a free civil society. With a full understanding of the ideas of full provision of all the rights of national minorities and with the aim of building a modern state built on civic foundations.

According to K. Petőcz, B. Bugár founded a Slovak-Hungarian party. As further analysed by Petőcz, there were different expectations of Slovak and Hungarian members (as well as the public) from this party. Slovaks expected it to be more "civic" (with more Slovaks and less attention to minority issues). The party itself started to be referred to as "civic", for the Hungarian voter it meant that it leaned towards liberal democracy (*polgári demokrácia*).

In Slovakia, however, the term civic democracy is not synonymous with liberal democracy. Rather, it is a symbol of the citizen's personal involvement in politics in the broad-spectrum interest of protecting and promoting human and civil rights. Withdrawal from minority claims would also not be acceptable to the Hungarian voters. We do not know how Slovak Hungarians think about the concepts of political science, whether their interpretation is Hungarian or Slovak, or they do not care about it. What is certain, however, is that the word "civic" is fashionable and popular and for a political party encoded in people's consciousness as "Hungarian" it is a sign that it is not based on Hungarian national exclusivity, but on the symbiosis of Slovakia's minority identities with the support of Slovak elites who promote tolerance in ethnic relations.

The SMK perceived the activities of B. Bugár and his supporters negatively. In particular in the beginning, the SMK gave Most-Híd no chance in establishing itself on the Slovak political scene. At the beginning of September 2009, when the SMK organized a demonstration against the amendment of the language law at the stadium in Dunajská Streda, B. Bugár also expressed interest in speaking at the event. Unsuccessfully. P. Csáky then talked about the new party in an interview for the daily *Sme*. *"Because he made a stupid thing. Creating a nonsensical combination that I don't even know a name for, it's not fortunate... They have a total of maybe 80 members.*

*They cannot establish basic, but also district and regional organizations. Their articles of association appoint officials from above. In the Chinese Communist Party, in the Korean Communist Party, and in this party, the chairman appoints who will be the regional and who will be the district boss. What kind of democratic party is that? Is that supposed to be a partner for us?*<sup>333</sup>

By trying to reach a wider range of voters, Most-Híd differed significantly from the SMK. Prior to the 2010 parliamentary elections, Most-Híd sought to gain support not only of voters from the Hungarian minority but also of voters from other minorities and citizens of Slovak nationality. They also adapted their list of candidates for the parliamentary elections to fit this intention; more than a third of the candidates was of Slovak nationality. Before the elections, Most-Híd also agreed on a joint list of candidates with the OKS, whose members also got on the party's list.<sup>334</sup> However, the focus on voters from a wider circle of national minorities in Slovakia and on the intellectual elites of Slovak society, who were interested in supporting the party promoting peace, understanding and consensual solutions of ethnic issues, meant that not only the SMK but also the Hungarian cross-border policy perceived the party as "non-Hungarian". On the one hand, the party used this status to mobilize and gain supporters in the non-Hungarian environment, and on the other hand, it felt like guilt, exclusion from the Hungarian community, manifested on various occasions. Usually, when they documented how Hungarian support funds, overseen by the SMK, bypass organizations and associations or municipalities administered by the members of Most-Híd. It was no secret hidden by a conspiracy. It was eloquently described by L. Szigeti: "*Fidesz's position on Most-Híd and on Béla Bugár is in fact in symbiosis with the spirit of the leaders of Smer, who consider the Slovak members of the bi-ethnic party to be renegades. No wonder. The most intense stench in Europe is spread by nationalism and rigid nation-states ...*"<sup>335</sup>

This was also confirmed by the statements of leading representatives of Hungarian politics. In December 2016, Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, L. Kövér, described the politicians from Most-Híd as "*Slovak politicians who speak Hungarian well*" and called them the "*traitors of the Hungarian nation*".<sup>336</sup> At a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee of the Hungarian Parliament for National Unity in May 2017, Deputy Prime Minister of Hungary Zs. Semjén said that the SMK is the partner of the Hungarian Government in Slovakia. "*If the SMK can come to an agreement with Most-Híd, let them do it, but it is their responsibility.*"<sup>337</sup> Diplomatic statements

333 *Sme*, 5. 9. 2009, Kern, M. – Krpelan, R. Maďarov sa netreba báť (rozhovor s P. Csákyom).

334 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2010...*, p. 96.

335 *Sme*, 24. 7. 2010, Szigeti, L. Jesť puding nožom na ryby.

336 Webnoviny, 6. 1. 2017, Danko: Most a Bugár získali pre Maďarov slušné pozície. <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/1131056-danko-most-a-bugar-ziskali-pre-madarov-slusne-pozicie/>

337 *Aktuality*, 9. 5. 2017, Maďarské občianstvo v zjednodušenom režime..., <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/486376/madarske-obcianstvo-v-zjednodusenom-rezime-udelili-takmer-milionu-ziadatelov/>

of Hungarian politicians put Most-Híd on the level of other political parties in Slovakia. After the 2012 elections, Zs. Németh, the State Secretary of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, considered the possibilities of cooperation with political parties in Slovakia *“The result of the SMK disappointed us, but we will continue to maintain privileged relations with them as a legitimate representative of the Hungarian community in Slovakia. Like with any other democratic party in Slovakia, we are ready to cooperate with the mixed party Most-Híd, whose efforts to defend the interests of the Hungarian community in the parliament are highly appreciated.”*<sup>338</sup>

After the parliamentary elections in 2010, a year after the party was founded, Most-Híd became part of the governing coalition together with the SDKÚ-DS, the SaS and the KDH.<sup>339</sup> Most-Híd won three seats in the government of I. Radičová. R. Chmel became the Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and Minorities, Zs. Simon became the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and J. Nagy became the Minister of the Environment.<sup>340</sup>

On the fifth anniversary of the party's establishment, B. Bugár assessed this period of the party's activities very positively, both for Slovak politics and for Slovak-Hungarian relations. In particular, he stressed the difference between the policy of Most-Híd and the SMK, Slovak opposition parties did not want to cooperate with the latter, due to their aggressively submitted demands. According to B. Bugár, the arrival of Most-Híd eased the tension because they promoted dialogue.<sup>341</sup> *“In our party, we always discuss all minority issues with the Slovaks first.”*<sup>342</sup>

At the same time, however, it is necessary to assert what an analyst, the founder of the Kalligram publishing house, L. Szigeti, wrote in one of his articles about this period of co-government of Most-Híd. *“In the very beginning of coalition negotiations, Most-Híd lost the two essential pillars of their program – the Act on the Status of National Minorities in Slovakia and the establishment of the Slovak-Hungarian Understanding Fund – the offered position of Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and Minorities and his professional department may only be called making a virtue of necessity ... However, some Slovak democrats think even this is too much.”*<sup>343</sup>

The fragile coalition did not break on the ethnic demands of Most-Híd, but did not last long. After the early parliamentary elections in 2012, Most-Híd joined the opposition. In June 2012, Most-Híd, as an opposition party, nominated L. Nagy as Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities. One of the options after the 2012 elections was to form a government coalition with Smer. However, Smer did not need

338 *Pravda*, 29. 3. 2012, Budapešť začína s Ficom od nuly, interview I. Drábek with Zs. Németh.

339 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2010...*, p. 95.

340 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj, legislatíva, právny štát a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2010...*, p. 45.

341 *Pravda*, 24. 7. 2014, Stupňan, I. Béla Bugár: Pravicu dokaličilo viac vecí (rozhovor).

342 *Webnoviny*, 11. 7. 2014, Jakubčo, J. Zmenilo sa ovzdušie, tvrdí Bugár po piatich rokoch Mosta-Híd. <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/843836-zmenilo-sa-ovzdušie-tvrdi-bugar-po-piatich-rokoch-mosta-hid/>.

343 *Sme*, 24. 7. 2010, Szigeti, L. Jesť puding nožom na ryby.

it and Most was not interested in such a coalition. Still, we can already see the nomination of Nagy as an indication of future cooperation after the elections in 2016. P. Morvay explained the reasons for Nagy's nomination with internal problems in Most. *"Serious signs of an internal crisis are beginning to appear in Most again. The party is cut off from the Slovak budget and the funds from Budapest still flow only to the SMK. ... there are more and more voices in the party questioning the future and meaning of Most. Bugár needs to show some achievement quickly and getting the post of Plenipotentiary, as well as the hope of access to state subsidies looks like an achievement, at least at first glance. However, this "success" may return like a boomerang when it is confirmed that the new Plenipotentiary has no powers, does not even have much money to distribute, and is only there to cover up and legitimize the nationalist steps of Smer."*<sup>344</sup>

Before the next parliamentary elections, the party adopted a program called *Občianska vízia 2016* (Civic Vision 2016), which was to guarantee the transformation of the party into a civic party, for all citizens in Slovakia, regardless of nationality and region. The aim was to maintain intensive contact with the citizen, help the citizen and transform the new policy into political preferences. According to B. Bugár, the program combined the civic principle and the nationality principle, as the members of minorities are also citizens of the Slovak Republic.<sup>345</sup>

After the 2016 parliamentary elections, Most-Híd became part of the governing coalition. Zs. Simon, one of the founding members, who disagreed with the decision of the Republic Council of Most-Híd on the party joining the government with Smer-SD, the SNS and Siet', left Most-Híd. His reasons were political, not ethnic. Other personal disputes and ambitions only became apparent later.<sup>346</sup> Bugár defended the decision of the Republic Council in an effort to prevent the rise of extremism and fears that early elections would only strengthen radical and non-systemic parties.<sup>347</sup> Slovak representatives of the party F. Šebej and L. Žitňanská reasoned in a similar spirit.<sup>348</sup>

The idea of forming a Slovak-Hungarian party expanded with the entry into the governing coalition in 2016. Most-Híd started to get really involved in favour of other

344 *Sme*, 15. 5. 2012, Splnomocnenec naoko.

345 *Webnoviny*, 10. 1. 2015, Smer kriví a zaťažuje chrbticu demokracie, interview R. Pavlík with B. Bugár. <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/909836-bugar-smer-krivi-a-zatazuje-chrbticu-demokracie/>; *Pravda*, 24. 7. 2014, Stupňan, I. Béla Bugár: Pravicu dokaličilo viac vecí (rozhovor). In this interview, B. Bugár confirmed (according to him, for the fourth time) that his party would not join the coalition with Smer.

346 As early as 2011, it was said that there were two wings in Most-Híd, Bugár's and Simon's. G. Gál commented at the time: *"I don't know what group Zsolt Simon has. He is from Gemer. He is a person who always expresses his opinion, even if the majority does not agree with it. Sometimes he can't give up. These are crucial questions for him, but that doesn't mean he has a group. He has different views on some issues. He sticks to them, even if we say something else."* *Aktuality*, 20. 6. 2011, Spokojný nebudem ani s Bugárom, ani so sebou, interview with G. Gál. <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/188841/gabor-gal-spokojny-nebudem-ani-s-bugarom-ani-sam-so-sebou/>

347 *Aktuálne*, 19. 3. 2016, Bratstvo Mosta-Híd so Smerom je spečatené. Zsolt Simon v strane končí.

348 *Aktuálne*, 19. 3. 2016, Iná možnosť nebola, bránia vládu so Smerom tváre Most-Híd.

minorities in Slovakia. It was most apparent in their involvement in Roma issues in the activities of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities Á. Ravasz. Most-Híd party member, a Ruthenian, P. Krajňák, made enormous efforts in minority education as Secretary at the Ministry of Education. Also in terms of focus, membership and activities, Most-Híd began to present itself as a party for all national minorities. Unlike the previous activities of Spolužité movement in the 1990s, they presented it in practical activities, not only in some formal indicators. The principle of tolerance in nationality relations, as an important principle of civil policy, remained one of their priorities. After the departure of the first part of the Slovak members from the party upon their joining the government in 2016, the representatives focused on achieving partial changes in favour of national minorities, (quietly tolerated by the SNS) in the development of minority education, minority cultures, minority language and the activities of the Plenipotentiary for National Minorities. The fact that the parties undertook not to pursue controversial issues in their post-election cooperation, which eliminated the aggressiveness of the SNS and Smer-SD in minority issues, typical for the previous periods, also had a positive effect.<sup>349</sup> As was prognostically advised by K. Petőcz in his article, *“It may happen that, in spite of everything, Most-Híd will enforce something for the Hungarian minority and for the society as a whole in the current government. Wish it was like that.”*<sup>350</sup>

In this regard, Most-Híd really fulfilled this role, and perhaps they will be given credited for this in their political epitaph that they built by their cooperation with the coalition government of Smer-SD and SNS. The party's decline was brought about by the reaction to the unfortunate events of February 2018, the murder of journalist J. Kuciak and his girlfriend M. Kušnírová. Most-Híd failed to distance themselves from the policy of Smer-SD, they remained in the governing coalition, determined to complete the minor corrections they had in with regard to the rights of national minorities. They underestimated the fact that the end of the corrupt, clientelistic policy represented by the three governments of R. Fico was more important than the objectives that Most-Híd wanted to achieve by the end of the election period. They were abandoned by further Slovak and Hungarian politicians, as well as by citizens and voters.

Most-Híd, despite the fact that their policy in promoting the rights of national minorities was extremely constructive and successful in Slovak conditions (the work of the Plenipotentiary for Minorities L. Bukovszky, as well as the work of the Roma Plenipotentiary A. Ravasz, strengthening the status of minority languages, positive changes in minority education, improving the use of language for example in the designation of municipalities and railway stations ...), suffered a political collapse and was discredited by their cooperation with Smer-SD and the SNS, closing their door to top Slovak politics for a long time, if not forever. Even in terms of Slovak-Hungarian relations, we can consider it a great loss for this camp.

349 *Sme*, 30. 12. 2016, Cuprik, R. Danko si získal aj časť Maďarov.

350 *Denník N*, 31. 3. 2016, Petőcz, K. Maďarská otázka opäť na programe.

Neither the individual socialist nor the liberal policy resonate among the Hungarian minority to an extent sufficient for creating a constructive force to represent the Hungarian minority. These groups gain positions either within Slovak political parties (civic parties that are not ethnically defined) or are activated in civil policy, civic associations and societies. In the current line of “Hungarian” politics in Slovakia, the political unification of groups and parties that want to be successful in Slovak politics can only happen in the form of a party with strong ethnic rhetoric.

RHS has the prospective strength and perhaps also the ambition to become a representative of the Hungarian minority in the civil policy. It is based on the Hungarian identity, but their activities are civic-ethnic, they are strongly critical of Slovak political representations, as well as Hungarian politics from abroad. However, they are managed in a diplomatic, moderate, conciliatory spirit, not closing the door on any partner (with the exception of extremist groups). These elements make it possible to look for the possibility of being a constructive element in the participatory model of minority policy in the changed conditions (discredited party membership), which could be the basis for developing a modern Slovak model of representation of the Hungarian minority (and possibly other minorities) in public administration, as well as legislative structures of Slovak society.

### **Other Political Parties and Movements Founded by Members of the Hungarian National Minority in Slovakia**

According to the register of political parties, there were also Strana maďarských socialistov/ Magyar Szocialisták Pártja (Party of Hungarian Socialists); Maďarská socialistická strana na Slovensku/ Szlovákiai Magyar Szocialista Párt (Hungarian Socialist Party in Slovakia); Maďarská federalistická strana/ Magyar föderalista part (Hungarian Federalist Party in Slovakia) in 2004.<sup>351</sup> These were later joined by Maďarské demokratické hnutie Rómov v Slovenskej republike (Hungarian Democratic Movement of the Roma in the Slovak Republic).<sup>352</sup> Maďarská kresťanskodemokratická aliancia/ Magyar Kereszténydemokrata Szövetség (Hungarian Christian Democratic Alliance) was established in 2013. It was led by Csaba Fehér, former director of the museum in Komárno.<sup>353</sup> The party received some attention only before the parliamentary elections in 2016 when Cs. Fehér presented the party’s program in the pre-election talks, it also included the cultural and educational autonomy of minorities living in Slovakia, the creation of a law on national minorities, efforts to remove the con-

351 Second Report on the Implementation of the *Framework Convention* in the Slovak Republic, p. 36.

352 Report on the Status and Rights of Members of National Minorities for 2012, p. 60-61.

353 *Teraz.sk*, 14. 2. 2016, MKDA chce kultúrnu a vzdelávaciu autonómiu menšín na Slovensku. <http://www.teraz.sk/import/mkda-chce-kulturnu-a-vzdelavaciu-auton/181837-clanok.html>

sequences of the “Beneš decrees” or the creation of Komárno, Rimavská Sobota and Trebišov counties.<sup>354</sup>

Another political party that wanted to get the votes of the Hungarian electorate, Maďarské fórum/ Magyar Fórum (Hungarian Forum) was founded in 2019 by Zs. Simon. The new party was to focus on voters who turned away from Most-Híd, as well as Hungarian non-voters.<sup>355</sup>

If we take into account the proportion of citizens of Hungarian nationality in Slovakia, and the fact that two major political parties (and a minor one) were already competing for their votes at that time, according to electoral mathematics, at the 5 % limit for entry to the parliament, another Hungarian political party had no chance to succeed as there are too few Hungarian voters in Slovakia for that. Simon’s political party did not even have the ambition to attract Slovak voters. It should be taken into account that while in the 1991 census 10.8 % of the population of Slovakia declared themselves to be of Hungarian nationality, in 2001 it was “only” 9.7 % and in 2011 it was only 8.5 %. This reflects a long-term, slow but apparently permanent trend of assimilation that Hungarian political parties will have to cope with over time.<sup>356</sup> Another factor is the gradually declining turnout at the elections in southern Slovakia. As stated by Zs. Lampl, the average turnout in the 16 mixed districts with Hungarian population which she assessed gradually decreased, from 94.81 % turnout in 1990, through 68.93 % turnout in 2002, to 54.34 % turnout in 2006. In 2010, the turnout in these districts increased slightly to 58.44 %, probably due to the participation of a new party, Most-Híd in the parliamentary elections and the related temporary activation of the Hungarian (but also Slovak) voter. Since 2012, the turnout has fallen again to 55.23 % in 2012, to 54.09 % in 2016.<sup>357</sup>

The problems of Hungarian political parties in Slovakia were thus caused by the decrease in the number of Hungarian voters, fragmentation of the political representation of the minority, but also by the fact that part of voters no longer found it important whether the party presented itself as an ethnic party and their choice is affected by party’s values or anti-system inclination. It is unlikely that ethnic political parties will be able to win more voters from the majority, therefore the solution is to merge (integrate) or at least form coalitions of ethnic political parties.

354 *Teraz.sk*, 14. 2. 2016, MKDA chce kultúrnu a vzdelávaciu autonómiu menších na Slovensku. <http://www.teraz.sk/import/mkda-chce-kulturnu-a-vzdelavaciu-auton/181837-clanok.html>

355 *Denník N*, 25. 7. 2018, Simon plánuje založiť novú stranu.

356 KOPEČEK, L. Politické strany na Slovensku 1989 až 2006..., p. 481.

357 MÉSZÁROSOVÁ – LAMPL, Z. Tendencie volebného správania príslušníkov maďarskej menšiny na Slovensku. In *Studia Politica Slovaca* 2019, year 12, No. 2, p. 26.



# Elections in Slovakia in 2004 – 2018 and the Hungarian Minority

## European Parliament Elections

### *European Parliament Elections 2004*

On 1 May 2004, the Slovak Republic joined the European Union together with other countries. According to the Treaty of Accession to the EU, Slovakia was represented by 14 members of the European Parliament.<sup>358</sup> The EP is a supranational parliamentary institution that, together with the Council of Europe and the European Commission, forms the so-called institutional triangle of the Union. The EP is the only EU institution directly elected by the citizens.<sup>359</sup>

The first EP elections in Slovakia took place on 13 June 2004. Two ethnic political parties, the SMK and Maďarská federalistická strana (Hungarian Federalist Party), competed for the voters of Hungarian nationality.<sup>360</sup> Only 16.96 % of all eligible voters participated in the EP elections in Slovakia. However, the turnout in municipalities with a majority Hungarian population was above average, although this difference was not so significant compared to other municipalities. The SMK received the most votes in the ethnically mixed areas of southern Slovakia.<sup>361</sup> In the first elections to the EP, the SMK exceeded the threshold of 5 %, and thus five political parties, the SDKÚ, the HZDS, Smer, the KDH and the SMK won parliamentary seats. The SMK won 13.24 % of the votes and was represented in the EP by two members.<sup>362</sup> Maďarská federalistická strana (Hungarian Federalist Party) won only 1,598 votes (0.22 %) in the elections.<sup>363</sup>

E. Bauer and Á. Duka-Zólyomi became MEP for the SMK.<sup>364</sup> Originally, J. Berényi was in second place of SMK's list of candidates, but the preferential vote moved Á. Duka-Zólyomi from third place to second place on the list of candidates. SMK's members joined the European People's Party political group in the EP.<sup>365</sup> In the EP, Á. Duka-Zólyomi was included in the Committee on Culture and Education and E. Bauer worked in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Af-

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358 *Webnoviny*, 17. 5. 2014, Slováci si vyberú europoslancov, do volieb ostáva týždeň.

359 *Teraz*, 30. 6. 2016, Prehľad výsledkov doterajších volieb do európskeho parlamentu.

360 *Webnoviny*, 17. 5. 2014, Slováci si vyberú europoslancov, do volieb ostáva týždeň.

361 KRIVÝ, V. Vol'by v roku 2004. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. (eds.). *Slovensko 2004. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky 2004, p. 146; *Webnoviny.sk*, 17. 5. 2014, Slováci si vyberú europoslancov, do volieb ostáva týždeň.

362 *Štatistický úrad SR*. <<http://volby.statistics.sk/ep/ep2004/ep2004s/obvod/results/tab6.html>>.

363 *Teraz*, 30. 6. 2016, Prehľad výsledkov doterajších volieb do európskeho parlamentu.

364 *Webnoviny*, 17. 5. 2014, Slováci si vyberú europoslancov, do volieb ostáva týždeň.

365 KRIVÝ, V. Vol'by v roku 2004. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. (eds.). *Slovensko 2004*. ..., p. 149.

fairs.<sup>366</sup> According to L. Kopeček, “*In the elections to the European Parliament in June 2004, the SMK confirmed the stability of their electoral support, when they won a very decent 13.2 % of the vote and won two of the 14 Slovak seats, practically without a major election campaign. However, it was extraordinary that in the traditionally disciplined voters in Hungarian districts, participation was almost identical to the low national average (about 17 % of voters).*” According to Kopeček, these elections confirmed that “*in the absence of greater motivation and mobilization of the voter by the SMK, the Hungarian electorate will not participate in the elections.*”<sup>367</sup>

### **European Parliament Elections 2009**

The second EP elections took place on 6 June 2009.<sup>368</sup> Although participation in the elections slightly increased compared to the first EP elections, it remained extremely low compared to other types of elections in Slovakia. Only 19.64 % of eligible voters took part in the elections, the lowest number in the EU. As in previous elections, municipalities with a significant Hungarian majority generally had an above-average turnout. There were several significant changes in these elections. After the increase in the number of EU member states from 25 to 27, in the elections in 2009, the number of parliamentary seats of the Slovak Republic decreased from 14 seats to 13 seats. Unlike the 2004 elections, where voters could only use one preferential vote, voters in the 2009 elections had two preferential votes. The “Hungarian issue” was also part of the election campaign for the European elections. V. Orbán, mobilized the Hungarians in the EP elections together with P. Csáky. He called on Slovak Hungarians to come to the polls and to “*defend the interests of Hungarians from the Carpathian Basin*” in the EP. Orbán’s statements about the Carpathian Basin and the representation of Hungarians in the European Parliament stirred Slovakia up.<sup>369</sup> In this context, it must be stressed that the EU is an association of states, not of nations, or regions or regional groupings. In this regard, V. Orbán’s statements contradicted such a policy and were an attempt to implant the new Hungarian model of supranational policy, which they tried to introduce in the European institutions by means of small details allowed by European policy rules (cooperation of members, meetings, selection of office space, submission of joint proposals ...).

Smer-SD was the winner of the European elections in Slovakia. The SDKÚ-DS, the SMK, the KDH, the HZDS and the SNS also got into the EP. The SMK won 11.33 % of the vote and the same number of seats as in the previous elections.<sup>370</sup> A. Mészáros E. Bauer defended her seat in the elections and A. Mészáros won the

366 Teraz, 30. 6. 2016, Prehľad výsledkov doterajších volieb do európskeho parlamentu.

367 KOPEČEK, L. *Politické strany na Slovensku 1989 až 2006*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2007, p. 473.

368 *Webnoviny*, 17. 5. 2014, Slováci si vyberú europoslancov, do volieb ostáva týždeň.

369 *Pravda*, 1. 6. 2009, Daniš, D. Maďarskú kartu nevytiahol Fico, ale Orbán.

370 KRIVÝ, V. Voľby v roku 2009. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2009. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 2010*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky 2010, p. 125-126, 130; Podrobnejšie k výsledkom volieb aj KRIVÝ,

second mandate.<sup>371</sup> A. Mészáros was assigned to the Committee on Legal Affairs, E. Bauer to the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.<sup>372</sup> Many problems of internal Slovak-Hungarian relations reached the EP through complaints, petitions and discussions. This aspect would deserve special attention and analysis, however, there is not enough space for this topic in this work. Regarding internal policy, on the Slovak side, it was perceived as a kind of “informing” and the effort to submit to the Brussels bureaucracy (especially on the part of the SNS, but also Smer), on the other hand as a way to create pressure on Slovak authorities to act on issues which had no chance to be solved in Slovakia.

In 2010, a member of the Slovak parliament, M. Duray, addressed a letter to the EP regarding the Slovak language law.<sup>373</sup> The chairman of the SDKÚ M. Dzurinda and I. Radičová spoke about him in Brussels with the President of the European People’s Party, W. Martens. He promised to convene a round table with the participation of people’s parties, including Fidesz, the SDKÚ and the SMK.<sup>374</sup> In September 2012, the “Beneš Decrees” were discussed on the premises of the Committee on Petitions of the European Parliament at the initiative of the Hungarian MEP.<sup>375</sup>

The petition for the Slovak Act on Citizenship was submitted in October 2012 by the civic association Council for Human Dignity, with the support of the SMK, as they saw it as another step in amending the law. The petition in the EP was supported by both SMK MEP E. Bauer and A. Mészáros.<sup>376</sup> The petition was initiated by Z. Lomnici, a citizen of Hungary, the former President of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Hungary. Slovak MP and the vice-chairman of the parliamentary group Europe of Freedom and Democracy in the EP J. Paška (SNS) reacted operatively to the Hungarian petition, raising an official objection to the admissibility of the petition in the EP bodies, as the petition does not meet the basic formal admissibility conditions defined by the EP Rules of Procedure. He also reminded that the EU places citizenship issues within the exclusive competence of the member states so that states are free to decide who and under what conditions can become a citizen of their country and have no reason to coordinate their rules with the EU institutions. Paška pointed out that out of European countries, Norway, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Denmark, Spain, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria also have similar legislation that does not allow double citizenship.<sup>377</sup>

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V. *Voliči a slovenské výsledky druhých volieb do Európskeho parlamentu*. <http://www.sociologia.sav.sk/publikacie.php?id=1211>

371 *Štatistický úrad SR*. <<http://volby.statistics.sk/ep/ep2009/sr/tab608c7.html?lang=sk>>.

372 *Teraz*, 30. 6. 2016, Prehľad výsledkov doterajších volieb do európskeho parlamentu.

373 *Hospodárske noviny*, 19. 5. 2010, Maďari v Bruseli zaútočili na náš zákon.

374 *Hospodárske noviny*, 19. 5. 2010, Maďari nám občianstvo môžu zatajiť.

375 *Pravda*, 16. 10. 2012, Predseda dostane ďalšiu petíciu.

376 *Teraz*, 4. 10. 2012, Predseda SMK podporuje petíciu proti zákonu, <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/predseda-smk-podporuje-peticiu-proti-z/24333-clanok.html>

377 *Teraz*, 6. 2. 2013, SNS si chce posvietiť na Slovákov s maďarským občianstvom, <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/sns-obcianstvo-madari/36841-clanok.html>; In the evaluation of the 2009 –

When evaluating the activities of MEP, according to VoteWatch Europe, which monitors the activities of all MEP, in the 2009 – 2014 election period, only E. Bauer and V. Maňka (Smer) were placed in the top 100. During the 2009 – 2014 election period, E. Bauer participated in 96.22 % of the votes, spoke 82 times in the plenary of the European Parliament and asked 28 questions, e.g. what the EU intends to do to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities do not feel discriminated against with regard to the use of their mother tongue in their own country in the EU. She was the rapporteur for 8 legislative proposals submitted to the EP, which was the most of all MEP for Slovakia. She submitted proposals for amendments to the resolution on 17 proposals.<sup>378</sup> According to K. Sládek, an analyst at the Centre for European Policy, E. Bauer had established contacts, plentiful experience and was able to enforce issues.<sup>379</sup> A. Meszáros participated in 91.08 % of the votes, spoke in the plenary 229 times and asked 25 questions. He submitted one legislative proposal in plenary and submitted a motion to amend the resolution on two proposals.<sup>380</sup>

### ***European Parliament Elections 2014***

According to analysts, the elections to the European Parliament in 2014 should have been different, as the authority of the EP increased. According to the new rules, the highest government representatives of the EU member states, who nominate a candidate for the position of the future president of the EC, had to do so on the basis of the election results. The EP then elected a new President of the EC by an absolute majority of the 751 new MEP.<sup>381</sup>

In the campaign before the 2014 European elections, the chairman of the SMK J. Berényi said that the election program was based on three main elements: He considered stopping the decline of the population of Hungarian nationality to be one of the important tasks, as in twenty years their number had decreased by 110,000.<sup>382</sup> The second goal was to support the economy of southern Slovakia. He stated that in 1989 there were 300,000 inhabitants of southern Slovakia, mostly of Hungarian nationality, who worked in agriculture and in 2011 there were only 30,000 of them. Comparing the state of state-subsidized socialist agriculture, with low mechanization, poor labour productivity and a high share of human labour with agriculture in 2011, which underwent major changes in all areas, was a bold step and required a lot of depersonalization from the development of society and economy over the past 25 years. The third

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2014 election period in the European Parliament, J. Paška described as his greatest success “*The suspension of the investigation of the Slovak Republic on the basis of a complaint filed by two Hungarian citizens who lost their Slovak citizenship. With the complaint, they wanted to force the Slovak Republic to amend the law on citizenship.*” (*Hospodárske noviny*, 16. 5. 2014, Slovákovi v Bruseli zatičila Edit Bauer.)

378 *Sme*, 12. 5. 2014, Europoslanci hlasujú skoro vždy.

379 *Hospodárske noviny*, 16. 5. 2014, Slovákovi v Bruseli zatičila Edit Bauer.

380 *Sme*, 12. 5. 2014, Europoslanci hlasujú skoro vždy.

381 *Teraz*, 11. 2. 2014, O 100 dní sa otvoria prvé volebné miestnosti pre eurovoľby. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/eurovolby-slovensko-poslanci-politika/73503-clanok.html>

382 We addressed the issue in the section on demography.

goal was to create the possibilities of special grant schemes for areas with high unemployment.<sup>383</sup> Mr. Csáky transformed the three pillars into the EU reform, gaining support for the regions of southern and eastern Slovakia and drawing funds from the EU. In his campaign before the European elections, he emphasized that if elected, he would transfer the problem of Hedviga Malinová to the European Parliament.<sup>384</sup>

The EP elections in Slovakia took place on 24 May 2014.<sup>385</sup> In the elections, mainly Most-Híd, the SMK and MKDA competed for the votes of Hungarian voters.<sup>386</sup>

Zs. Simon became the leader of Most-Híd list of candidates for the European elections, J. Nagy was number two and F. Šebej was number three.<sup>387</sup> Simon's first place in the list of candidates to the EP was attributed not only to his efforts to assert himself on the ground of the EP, but also to the tense relationship of Zs. Simon with the party chairman B. Bugár.<sup>388</sup>

The composition of the list of candidates for the European elections and the internal situation in the SMK before the nomination were disrupted by the fact that E. Bauer voted in favour of her colleague U. Lunacek's report, which contained relatively general recommendations for the Member States to guarantee the rights of homosexuals. Former long-term Deputy Prime Minister for Minorities and Human Rights P. Csáky joined some members of SMK in the criticism and attributed such a "failure" of the MEP also to her advanced age. The fact that E. Bauer subsequently informed the chairman of the SMK Berényi that she did not intend to run a few days before the meeting of the republican council possibly suited the SMK leaders and P. Csáky himself because it could not be assumed that the SMK would win more than one or two seats in the elections. Should the relatively well-respected E. Bauer run for the post of MEP again, Csáky would have a lot of competition in obtaining the post of an MEP.<sup>389</sup> P. Csáky thus became the leader of the SMK candidate for the EP elections in May. It can be assumed that the SMK nominated Csáky as the leader of the list of candidate for the European Parliament, mainly in order to get rid of the ex-chairman, who in the hope of returning to the leadership of the party continued to "cause problems" to his successor. Csáky himself also helped himself to a chance for

383 *Teraz*, 16. 9. 2014, J. Berényi potvrdil priamy politický vplyv v kauze Hedvigy M. Ž., <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/kauza-hedviga-berenyi-smk/98224-clanok.html>

384 *Teraz*, 17. 5. 2014, S Jobbikom sa nikto z národných strán baviť nebude, <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/jobbik-sns-politika-eurovolby/84732-clanok.html>; *Sme*, 16. 5. 2014, Fidez nás neplatí, s Jobbikom sa nestýkame (rozhovor D. Mikušoviča s P. Csáky).

385 *Aktuality*, 25. 3. 2014, Eurovoľby 2014: O 13 kresiel europoslancov sa uchádza 333 kandidátov. <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/249832/eurovolby-2014-o-13-kresiel-europoslancov-sa-uchadza-333-kandidatov/>

386 *Teraz*, 21. 3. 2014, Do eurovoľieb sa chce zapojiť 29 politických subjektov. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/eurovolby-politicka-strana-kandidatka-su/78333-clanok.html>

387 *Teraz*, 4. 3. 2014, Lídom eurokandidátky Mosta-Híd má byť Zsolt Simon. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/lider-eurovolby-most-hid-simon/76047-clanok.html>

388 *Aktuálne*, 9. 4. 2014, Esá či esička? Pozrite sa, kto vás chce zastupovať v Bruseli a mať kráľovský plat. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/esa-ci-esicka-pozrite-sa-kto-vas-chce-zastupovat-v-bruseli-a-mat-kralovsky-plat/slovensko/politika/>

389 *Sme*, 26. 2. 2014, Morvay, P. Obrana rodiny, obrana jazyka.

a well-paid place in Brussels by disgusting his main competitor's candidacy with an indecent reference to her advanced age.<sup>390</sup> In the end, the finishing MEP for the SMK, A. Mészáros, did not get on the list of candidates. According to the party chairman, he decided not to run in the European elections after the Republican Council elected P. Csáky as the leader. I. Farkas, the party's Deputy Chairman for the Economy and Regional Development, thus became the second candidate. According to Berényi, the other (in fact impossible to win) positions on the list of candidates were filled mainly by young people. Before the elections, the chairman of the SMK also announced that they would dare to have at least two MEP seats. The leader of the candidates stated that *"they hope that the voters of Hungarian nationality will support the SMK by as a party that offers the only Hungarian candidate."*<sup>391</sup>

L. Gubik, chairman of the civic association Via Nova, the youth organization of the SMK, also ran in the EP elections for Hungarian Fidesz.<sup>392</sup> In one of the pre-election interviews, the leader of the candidates of Most-Híd Zs. Simon mentioned that a member of the SMK from Štúrovo is running in the European elections for Jobbik. A few days later, P. Csáky commented on this: *"We have no contacts with Jobbik. We learned about this man's step from the media and suggested that he resigns or terminates his membership. He suspended his membership, he is acting as a private person. The party has nothing to do with it."*<sup>393</sup>

The MKDA also had their candidates in the European elections. The leader of the candidates was M. Krivánský, number two was Zs. Pelle, followed by Z. Bugár, M. Vicena and B. Csicsák.<sup>394</sup>

A record few people voted in the European elections in Slovakia again. The turnout was only 13.05 %.<sup>395</sup> Smer-SD was the winner of the elections in Slovakia; the KDĽ, the SDKÚ-DS, the OĽaNO, coalition NOVA-KDĽ-OKS, the SaS, the SMK and Most-Híd also got into the EP.<sup>396</sup> SMK won 6.53 % and Most-Híd 5.83 % of the

390 *Sme*, 17. 5. 2014, Morvaj, P. Prejav krízy SMK.

391 *Teraz*, 15. 2. 2014, Kandidátku SMK do eurovolieb povedie Pál Csáky. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/smk-eurovolby-kandidati/74009-clanok.html>

392 *Teraz*, 23. 4. 2014, M. Pavlovič: Mládež SNS protestuje proti šovinizmu mladých z SMK. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/pavlovic-mladez-sns-protest-smk/82029-clanok.html>

393 *Sme*, 16. 5. 2014, Fidesz nás neplatí, s Jobbikom sa nestýkame.

394 *Štatistický úrad SR*. [https://volby.statistics.sk/ep/ep2014/EP-dv/reg\\_kandidat.html](https://volby.statistics.sk/ep/ep2014/EP-dv/reg_kandidat.html)

395 The consistently minimal participation of Slovak citizens in the EP elections and, on the other hand, the high level of trust in the European institutions have been described in political science circles as the "Slovak paradox". To eliminate it, political scientist R. Štefančík recommended *"to start paying more attention to the political abilities, competence in European issues and, in addition, the communication skills of his candidates in own party structures and when compiling lists of candidates. At the same time, the rules should be observed that the leading positions in the list of candidates, even though these are elections that are insignificant with regard to power, are not intended for political retirees, wives of former or current party donors or indistinct faces from the environment of youth organizations."* (*Sme*, 27. 5. 2014, Štefančík, R. Vo voľbách prehrali všetci).

396 *Teraz*, 30. 6. 2016, Prehľad výsledkov doterajších volieb do európskeho parlamentu. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/sk-pres-prehľad-výsledkov-doterajsi/204416-clanok.html>

vote. MKDA won only 0.20 % in the elections, which, with a record low turnout, meant that only 1,170 people voted for the party. Most-Híd and the SMK won one parliamentary seat each. P. Csáky became a member of the EP for the SMK and J. Nagy for Most-Híd, his preferential votes moved him from the second place on the list of candidates to the first.<sup>397</sup> Despite the fact that Most-Híd announced their transformation into a civic party with a strengthened Slovak pillar before the elections, it reflected only minimally in the results, except for the districts with significant representation of the Hungarian minority. Most-Híd won more than 5 % in 19 districts, however, most of them were districts with a significant representation of the Hungarian minority. Still, the party obtained more significant results in Bratislava or Svidník, where Most addressed the Ruthenians in their language too. However, the SMK clearly dominated in the districts with a significant representation of voters of Hungarian nationality. In the south of Slovakia, Most won more votes only in the districts of Dunajská Streda and Rožňava.<sup>398</sup>

After the European elections, P. Csáky said that he was pleasantly surprised by the fact that more people voted for the SMK than Most-Híd. He believed that this result indicated a change in conditions in southern Slovakia. He also said that he wanted to be more visible than previous MEP.<sup>399</sup> Although the SMK described as a success that the party won more than 5 % in the European elections and even got ahead of Most, the party exceeded 5 % only due to the extremely low turnout. This confirmed that the SMK was successful, especially in elections with very low turnout, such as the European elections.

The leader of Most-Híd's list of candidates Zs. Simon said that he had expected a different result in the European elections, but he was pleased that the party succeeded and wished his colleague J. Nagy success. When asked whether he considered resigning as the party's vice-chairman due to electoral failure, he said it was irrelevant at the moment, as he considered the elections a success and the party was successful. Simon was not pleased with the low interest of voters in the European elections and, pointed out the advantage of those parties that had been on the political scene for many years and thus had a solid base of voters.<sup>400</sup>

When evaluating the elections, journalist P. Morvay said that Most gained less than the SMK and thus lost in the symbolic battle of the Hungarian parties, also J. Nagy went to Brussels instead of Simon, the latter being a more credible and relatively new face of Most and Slovak politics. *“After his personal failure, Bugár was left on the domestic political scene with frustrated Zsolt Simon, an untrustworthy,*

397 *Štatistický úrad SR*. [http://volby.statistics.sk/ep/ep2014/EP-dv/Tabulka3\\_sk.html](http://volby.statistics.sk/ep/ep2014/EP-dv/Tabulka3_sk.html)

398 *Sme*, 27. 5. 2014, Skalní Smeru volia čoraz menej.

399 *Teraz*, 25. 5. 2014, P. Csákyho si cení voličov SMK, Zs. Simon čakal iný výsledok. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/csaky-simon-smk-ucast-most-eurovolby/85642-clanok.html>

400 *Teraz*, 25. 5. 2014, P. Csákyho si cení voličov SMK, Zs. Simon čakal iný výsledok. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/csaky-simon-smk-ucast-most-eurovolby/85642-clanok.html>

*unpopular politician and a major internal instigator who has already threatened to form his own party.*<sup>401</sup>

Both J. Nagy and P. Csáky joined the political group of the People's Party. J. Nagy worked in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and as an alternate member in the Committee on the Environment and the Committee on Petitions. P. Csáky was elected the Vice-Chair of the EP's Committee on Petitions. This seat was freed by Hungarian Fidesz, who is also a member of the EPP. Csáky justified this by saying that *"there was an exchange and the place went to Fidesz. However, they did not have a proper member in this committee who could hold such a position, so they offered this seat to the Slovak delegation."* P. Csáky was also an alternate member of the Committee on Civil Liberties. Slovak MEP were irritated by the fact that Csáky did not have an office in Brussels among Slovak MEP, but among the Hungarian MEP from Fidesz. *"My neighbours in Strasbourg are MEP from Slovakia, József Nagy and Anna Záborská. In Brussels, they offered me a better office, with three rooms."*<sup>402</sup> Csáky led seven missions to the various EU Member States, and in February 2018 the EP plenary approved a resolution he proposed to protect the rights of historical minorities in the EU, in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) he was co-responsible for two documents related to the security of EU citizens.

According to him, he *"supported five petitions"* concerning the everyday life of Slovak citizens with regard to the protection of minority languages, use of bilingual signs at railway stations, protection of drinking water in the Žitný ostrov area and the removal of the Vraľuň landfill, the petition against double standards for food quality of the same brands in the EU countries, petitions for an apology for the application of the "Beneš Decrees" and petitions of farmers. He organized an exhibition of Hungarian artists from Slovakia in the EP, Csemadok was awarded by the EU as a European citizen at his initiative.<sup>403</sup> Members of Smer had strong reservations about the activities of MEP P. Csáky. They reminded him that, as an MEP, he was elected for the Slovak Republic. P. Csáky proved his solidarity with the MEP of Slovakia by the fact that all thirteen MEP for Slovakia met once a month for a working lunch in the EP.<sup>404</sup>

In 2014, P. Csáky's position in the EP was problematic again. In a letter to the French president, in which some MEP praised the French government's decision to suspend the delivery of the Mistral helicopter ship to Russia, next to MEP P. Csáky it said Hungary. According to him, the original of the letter was signed in his own name and he stated the political group of the European People's Party. He allegedly did not pay attention to the letter later, other MEP joined the call for signing. *"Sud-*

401 *Sme*, 27. 5. 2014, Morvay, P. Porazení vítazi.

402 *Sme*, 13. 7. 2014, Smer vyzval Csákyho, aby povedal, či má maďarské občianstvo; *Teraz.sk*, 3. 7. 2014, Slovenskí europoslanci už vedia, v akých výboroch EP budú pracovať. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/slovenski-europoslanci-pozicie/90330-clanok.html>

403 *Teraz*, 28. 7. 2018, P. Csáky inicioval rezolúciu na ochranu práv historických menšín v EÚ. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/p-csaky-europoslanec/339614-clanok.html>

404 *Aktuality*, 31. 7. 2018, Pál Csáky sa rozhodol nekandidovať v prezidentských voľbách.



denly, after about ten days, he found out that there was such a typo.” In an interview for the press, he did not “rule out” that he would ask the EP’s press department for a correction, but he downplayed the situation that “such a technical error” does not require political conclusions.<sup>405</sup>

### ***European Parliament Elections 2019***

So far, the last EP elections took place on 25 May 2019. Three Hungarian political parties competed for the voters of Hungarian nationality. Most-Híd with MEP J. Nagy as the leader of the candidates, SMK with MEP P. Csáky as the leader of the candidates and MKDA, which nominated teacher Károly Lessa as the leader of the candidates.

22.74 % of eligible voters took part in the elections. The coalition Progressívne Slovensko – Spolu was the most successful in the elections. The representatives of Smer-SD, Kotleba-ĽSNS, the KDH, the SAS and OĽaNO also joined the EP. Not a single candidate representing the Hungarian minority in Slovakia got a seat in the EP. The SMK won only 4.96 % of the vote, Most only 2.59 % of the vote and MKDA 0.23 %.<sup>406</sup>

### **Presidential Elections**

#### ***Presidential Elections 2004***

In 2004, 11 candidates ran for president. The first round of the presidential elections took place on 3 April could not agree on a common candidate before the elections. The SDKÚ-DS supported the Minister of Foreign Affairs E. Kukan, the KDH nominated F. Mikloško, who was later supported also by the SMK. ANO supported the actor Ľ. Roman, who, however, resigned shortly before the official start of the election campaign.<sup>407</sup> The HZDS nominated their chairman V. Mečiar for the presidential elections. I. Gašparovič, chairman of the extra-parliamentary party HZD, formed by splitting from the HZDS, was also running for the position of president. He was also supported by the SNS-PSNS group around J. Šlota. The then President R. Schuster also ran for president again as an independent candidate. In addition to these candidates, other candidates also took part in the elections, either independently or with the support of non-parliamentary political parties.<sup>408</sup> The election campaign focused more on individual personalities and Slovak-Hungarian relations played a marginal role.<sup>409</sup>

405 *Pravda*, 27. 10. 2014, Podpis Csákyho ako europoslanca Maďarska bol vraj preklep.

406 *Štatistický úrad SR*. <https://volby.statistics.sk/ep/ep2019/sk/data02.html>

407 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. (eds.). *Slovensko 2004. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky 2004, p. 61-62.

408 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. (eds.). *Slovensko 2004...*, p. 61-62.

409 *Aktuálne*, 9. 2. 2014, Pamätáte sa? Tieto témy dominovali prezidentským kampaniam na Slovensku. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/pamatate-si-tieto-temy-dominovali-prezidentskym-kampaniam-na-slovensku/slovensko/politika/>

In the first round of elections, 47.94 % of eligible voters took part. Two candidates with the largest number of votes advanced to the second round of elections, V. Mečiar with the support of 32.73 % and I. Gašparovič with the support of 22.28 % of the participating voters. E. Kukan, who was supported by 22.09 % of voters, finished in third place. He was followed by R. Schuster with 7.42 %, F. Mikloško with 6.51 %, M. Bútora with 6.51 %. The other candidates won less than one percent of the vote.<sup>410</sup>

Both first and second rounds of the presidential elections were characterized by low turnout, not typical in the Hungarian environment. The SMK mobilized the Hungarian minority in favour of F. Mikloško only minimally. Turnout was very low in the districts of Dunajská Streda (20.2 %), Komárno (22.4 %), but also in other districts with a strong representation of the Hungarian minority. In the municipalities with a higher proportion of Hungarians, there was a higher share of votes for E. Kukan, R. Schuster, F. Mikloško, and M. Bútora. However, due to the low turnout in the Hungarian environment, there were relatively few votes, which were also distributed among several candidates. Although the SMK officially supported F. Mikloško, the participating supporters of the SMK supported E. Kukan and R. Schuster in the elections.<sup>411</sup>

Before the second round of elections, the SMK did not recommend their voters to vote for any of the advancing candidates, and although they did not call upon them not to participate in the elections, the chairman of the SMK B. Bugár publicly stated that he personally would not go to the polls in the second round.<sup>412</sup> The winner of the second round was I. Gašparovič, who won 59.91 % of the vote. V. Mečiar won 40.09 % of the vote.<sup>413</sup>

Compared to the first round, the turnout in the districts of Southern Slovakia was even lower in the second round. In the district of Dunajská Streda, for example, only 11.7 %. In towns with a higher proportion of the Hungarian minority, I. Gašparovič won a high number of votes. In Šamorín 82.9 %, in Kolárovo 80.6 %, etc. However, with a low turnout, which in Šamorín, for example, represented only 20.5 % and in Kolárovo 10.4 %, the number of votes obtained was not really high.<sup>414</sup>

### **Presidential Elections 2009**

Seven candidates competed in the presidential race in 2009. Six of them ran with the support of a political party or several parties. They were the incumbent President I. Gašparovič, who was supported by the strongest coalition party Smer-SD,

410 Štatistický úrad SR. [https://volby.statistics.sk/prez/prez2004/prezident/prezident\\_obv/results/tab6.jsp.htm](https://volby.statistics.sk/prez/prez2004/prezident/prezident_obv/results/tab6.jsp.htm)

411 KRIVÝ, V. Voľby v roku 2004. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. (eds.). *Slovensko 2004...*, p. 129-130, 132.

412 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. (eds.). *Slovensko 2004...*, p. 63.

413 Štatistický úrad SR. [https://volby.statistics.sk/prez/prez2004/prezident/prezident\\_obv/results/tab10.jsp.htm](https://volby.statistics.sk/prez/prez2004/prezident/prezident_obv/results/tab10.jsp.htm)

414 KRIVÝ, V. Voľby v roku 2004. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. (eds.). *Slovensko 2004...*, p. 137-139.

the SNS and the HZD, I. Radičová, who was supported by the majority of opposition parties the SDKÚ, the SMK, the OKS, the SaS and, after some reservations, the KDH. F. Mikloško, who was supported by the politician who had left the KDH and founded the KDS, Z. Martináková, who was supported by the SF, M. Melník, who was supported by another coalition party the HZDS, and M. Sidor, who was supported by the KSS. The only independent candidate was D. Bollová.<sup>415</sup>

Even before the first round of elections, there were indications that the campaign will also use the so-called ‘Hungarian card’. In one of the pre-election debates, Z. Martináková called on I. Radičová not to take campaign money from the SMK, because it is a direct commitment. In the discussion, Radičová stated that she had not yet decided whether to accept the SMK’s offer or to finance her campaign only with the SDKÚ-DS money and donations. I. Gašparovič reproached Radičová that she was accompanied in Southern Slovakia by P. Csáky, B. Bugár and Zs. Simon. Radičová replied that the President should unite and she managed to get P. Csáky and B. Bugár at one round table and they normally discussed the future of Slovakia. In the debate, Radičová also emphasized that people look at the Hungarian card with reservations and reluctance.<sup>416</sup>

I. Gašparovič’s main campaign slogan “*I think nationally, I feel socially*” was also supposed to be a symbol of his national consistency and social feeling.

The first round of elections took place on 21 March 2009. Turnout in the first round reached 43.6 % of eligible voters. The winner of the first round was I. Gašparovič, who won 46.71 % of the votes, I. Radičová won 38.05 % of the votes, F. Mikloško 5.41 %, Z. Martináková 5.12 %, M. Melník 2.45 %, D. Bollová 1.13 % and M. Sidor 1.11 % of the vote.<sup>417</sup>

The campaign before the second round of elections intensified. It also involved a strong disinformation campaign, which worked as a strong phenomenon for the first time in the presidential elections in Slovakia. Given that its effect was controversial, even counterproductive, for the “initiator”, his “victim” (I. Radičová) was described by her political opponents as the deliberate initiator of the campaign. First, in the south of Slovakia, especially in front of shopping centres, several hundred leaflets appeared, with the text in Hungarian: “*Dear Hungarians living in Slovakia, if you vote for me and we will be successful, I promise to support your old desires for autonomy.*” The head of Radičová’s staff, Ján Füle, pointed out to the leaflets on the very day and filed a criminal complaint. A few hours later, one of the West Slovak regional weekly newspapers received an advertisement with the text: “*Do we want a president who received the support of the SMK for the promise of autonomy, or a person who defends the interests of Slovakia?*”<sup>418</sup>

415 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Prezidentské voľby 2009: profil kandidátov, postoje a činnosť politických strán. In MESEŽNIKOV, G. – GYARFÁŠOVÁ, O. – KOLLÁR, M. (eds.). *Slovensko volí. Európske a prezidentské voľby 2009*. Bratislava: IVO, Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2009, p. 91-92.

416 *Aktuálne*, 17. 3. 2009, Zvolebnieva sa, kandidáti dávajú stávky aj výzvy.

417 *Štatistický úrad SR*. <https://volby.statistics.sk/prez/prez2009/jsp/okres/tab7.jsp.htm>

418 *Aktuálne*, 28. 3. 2009, Radičová: Kto rozdeľuje fúdi, nemôže byť prezidentom.

I. Radičová's response was an extraordinary briefing at which Radičová stated that "dividing voters and citizens on the basis of ethnicity, intimidation of citizens, use of the Hungarian card, disqualifies the candidate for President of the Slovak Republic." Radičová further said that a president, using the Hungarian card, stirs unrest and instability into the coexistence of the citizens of the Republic and such a person is not and cannot be the President of the Slovak Republic. "I urge him to stop threatening citizens, dividing them into Slovaks and the others, to stop using the Hungarian card and to publicly distance himself from such practices and condemn them." Radičová also rejected the violation of the integrity of the Slovak Republic and fundamentally rejected any demands for autonomy. Radičová's election team also filed a criminal complaint with the Prosecutor General's Office for false posters promising autonomy, as well as for the misleading advertising with an ethnic subtext. A spokesman for President M. Trubač distanced himself on behalf of the President and his team from the leaflet campaign and said that the matter must be investigated by the police. He denied that Gašparovič was opening a Hungarian card, according to him it was I. Radičová.<sup>419</sup>

Later, the Vice-President of the SNS, A. Belousovová, admitted the advertisements in the Slovak language and in the Slovak press, which attributed the presidential candidate I. Radičová's efforts for autonomy.<sup>420</sup> However, the SNS refused any connection with the leaflets.

"We consider their distribution to be stupid. In our opinion, they are the work of the election team of Mrs. Radičová," said the chairman of the SNS J. Slota. Radičová called it nonsense and reminded that they had filed a criminal complaint about fake leaflets and misleading advertising.<sup>421</sup> The SNS, which supported I. Gašparovič in the elections, even convened an extraordinary conference on the presidential elections due to such alleged "threats". Their leader J. Slota called on voters not to let people like P. Csáky or M. Duray elect the head of the state. He said it seemed misleading for the Hungarian minority to elect a president for the majority. According to Slota, Southern Slovakia was in danger of autonomy if Radičová won the elections and if V. Orbán from Fidesz became the Prime Minister of Hungary. The SNS leaders also called Radičová hypocritical and immoral.<sup>422</sup> To support Gašparovič, there were also billboards with the text: "Don't let Csáky decide on the Slovak President! Come and vote for Ivan Gašparovič." The head of Gašparovič's team, J. Grapa, claimed that

419 *Aktuálne*, 28. 3. 2009, Radičová: Kto rozdeľuje ľudí, nemôže byť prezidentom.

420 *Pravda*, 30. 3. 2009, Petková, Z. – Schniererová, D. The SNS admitted a campaign against Radičová; Advertising for the SNS was provided by agency "-mrs-", which also provided political advertising for the HZD of M. Gašparovič and for the campaigns of members of the HZDS in the municipal elections. (*Sme*, 31. 3. 2009, SNS sa priznala k inzercii.)

421 *Sme*, 31. 3. 2009, SNS sa priznala k inzercii. However, Attorney General D. Trnka stated that they would only deal with advertising, the leaflets "written in bad Hungarian" did not meet the attributes of a crime. (*Sme*, 2. 4. 2009, Vagovič, M. Prokuratúru letáky proti Radičovej netrápia; However, the police still investigated the case of leaflets. I. Radičová was also questioned, (*Pravda*, 27. 7. 2009, Falošné predvolebné letáky...), but the public was not informed on the result of investigation.

422 *Hospodárske noviny*, 30. 3. 2009, Boj o Hrad. Na stole je maďarská karta.

they had nothing to do with the poster, and R. Rafaj from the SNS also said that it was not theirs, although he did not mind it.<sup>423</sup>

The Hungarian card was also one of the main topics in the pre-election debates before the second round of elections. Incumbent President Gašparovič criticized Radičová for promising “*more than she promised the rest of the country ... I did not promise them the abolition of the Beneš's Decrees or autonomy*” during the rallies in southern Slovakia, together with politicians from the SMK.” Radičová responded that she fundamentally disagrees with the autonomy and rejects this topic as a topic for Slovakia. “*It is rejected by all reasonable politicians.*” She reminded that politicians from the SMK were members of several governments and held various high state positions and “*never opened this topic.*” Radičová also said that she publicly renounced any support of politicians who talk about this topic.<sup>424</sup> In the last television debate, I. Gašparovič stated that I. Radičová is the one who divides the citizens. “*I did not go to the SMK assembly, where Mr. Orbán, Duray and Csáky were asking for support.*” At the same time, he stated that he did not mind the SNS initiative against Mrs. Radičová. “*The Hungarian card was drawn out by the SNS, which supports President Gašparovič,*” Radičová objected. She reminded the opponent that he also sat and negotiated at one table with the SMK.<sup>425</sup>

The second round of elections took place on 3 April 2009. The turnout was higher than in the first round, reaching 51.7 %. This was also due to the effective Hungarian card campaign of the SNS which mobilized the voters of both Gašparovič and Radičová. I. Gašparovič won the votes of 55.53 % of voters, while Radičová was voted by 44.46 % of voters. I. Gašparovič thus became the first re-elected President.<sup>426</sup>

According to sociologist V. Krivý, the 2009 elections were interesting due to the change in the “*pattern*” of voter turnout of citizens of Hungarian nationality between the first and second round. While in the first round of the elections the participation in municipalities with a Hungarian share of 40 % and more was below average and ranged between 37.0 and 39.9 %, after the anti-campaign against Radičová with a significant help of the Hungarian card, the turnout of Hungarians increased significantly, it was the highest in the municipalities with the Hungarian majority. When comparing the second round with the first round, the largest increase was in the districts with a significant representation of the Hungarian minority, such as the districts of Dunajská Streda, Komárno, Galanta, etc. It was Radičová who received considerable support, either in the first or in the second round, from the Hungarian minority voters who did come to vote.<sup>427</sup>

423 *Sme*, 31. 3. 2009, V Žiline hrozia Csákym.

424 *Aktuálne*, 29. 3. 2009, Radičová: Aj Gašparoviča proti Mečiarovi podporili Maďari.

425 *Hospodárske noviny*, 2. 4. 2009, V poslednom dueli prevládala maďarská karta.

426 KRIVÝ, V. Voľby v roku 2009. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2009. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 2010*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky 2010, p. 111-112, 118.

427 KRIVÝ, V. Voľby v roku 2009. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2009...*, p. 113; Podrobnejšie aj: KRIVÝ, V. *Voliči v prezidentských voľbách 2009*. <http://www.sociologia.sav.sk/publikacie.php?id=1199>

### *Presidential elections 2014*

In the 2014 presidential election, for the first time, the non-parliamentary SMK introduced their own candidate for the President of the Slovak Republic. The chairman of the SMK J. Berényi told the press in October 2013 that there was a strong demand in the party to have their own candidate. He also said that if the SMK did not nominate their own candidate, the presidential candidate to be supported by the SMK would have to agree with a document on preserving the identity of Hungarians living in Slovakia agreed by the SMK, Most-Híd and RHS. J. Berényi reproached a possible right-wing candidate, P. Hrušovský, for not voting for the law of the MP of Most-Híd to introduce bilingual names of railway stations. *“If we meet with him, we will ask him why he did not vote. ... If he wants to get Hungarian votes, he should vote for such proposals.”*<sup>428</sup> P. Csáky, one of the leaders of the SMK, had previously told the press that the party should nominate their own presidential candidate. According to Csáky, the support of a Slovak candidate, who sure to lose, would be demotivating for the party’s supporters, and telling the party’s supporters to stay at home would be a serious political mistake that the party would surely pay for in the future. Nominating their own candidate, according to Csáky, de facto meant the possibility of mobilizing the party’s voting potential, and therefore he was a supporter of this possibility.<sup>429</sup> Gy. Bárdos became the presidential candidate of the SMK. According to political analyst Baránek, the nomination of Bárdos was the result of elections to the higher territorial units, after which the SMK found that they had the upper hand over Most-Híd and felt the chance to marginalize Most-Híd even more, as part of the internal struggle between these parties.<sup>430</sup>

The chairman of Most-Híd, B. Bugár, commented on Bárdos’s candidacy that the SMK nominated a presidential candidate only to draw attention to the brand. He appreciated that it was not a bad move from the point of view of the SMK, but from the point of view of Slovakia, he assessed this move as very bad. He also said that P. Hrušovský is the best candidate among the number of candidates on the non-socialist side, and therefore Most-Híd supported him. Bugár highlighted Hrušovský’s more positive attitude towards minorities, which he documented by his attitudes towards the establishment of the Hungarian J. Selye University in Komárno. He also stressed that if there was no KDH, if it was not for Hrušovský, then, for example in Radičová’s government, the decisions on the list of municipalities in which the use of bilingual designation is possible would not have passed. However, according to Bugár Gy. Bárdos could reach out to the voters of Most-Híd in the south of Slovakia, which would not be

428 *Aktuálne*, 19. 7. 2013, Prezidentský kandidát musí súhlasiť..., <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/smk-prezidentsky-kandidat-ma-suhlasit-so-zachovanim-identity-madarov/slovensko/politika/>

429 *Webnoviny*, 14. 10. 2013, SMK podporí kandidáta, ktorý akceptuje Maďarov na Slovensku. <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/smk/744356-clanok.html>

430 *Aktuálne*, 10. 2. 2014, Hrušovský sa v prieskumoch potápa. Na chrbát mu dýcha aj Mezenská. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/hrusovsky-sa-v-prieskumoch-potapa-na-chrbat-mu-dycha-aj-mezenska/slovensko/politika/>

possible for a candidate like, for example, P. Csáky.<sup>431</sup> The SMK presidential candidate Gy. Bárdos said that his candidacy would not weaken the right's chances of succeeding in the elections, but would help the people of Southern Slovakia to go to the polls in large numbers, and hopes that his voters will support a candidate representing the civil principle and minority rights in the second round. When asked if he really expected his victory in the presidential election, Bárdos responded that not only favourites are travelling to the Olympics.<sup>432</sup>

Thus, in the 2014 elections ran the highest number of candidates so far, 15. In addition to Bárdos and Hrušovský, the then Prime Minister and the Chairman of the strongest political party Smer-SD, R. Fico; A. Kiska; M. Kňažko; J. Čarnogurský; R. Procházka; H. Mezenská and others also ran for President. With regard to this high number of candidates, political scientist Horský stated that candidates who are unlikely to be successful can nevertheless have several motives for running for president. *“Either they will serve their own parties to promote the brand, or they expect their possible positive result to make it easier for them to form new political parties, or they just want to be seen by the public.”*<sup>433</sup>

A few weeks before the election, there was talk in the SDKÚ and Most that P. Hrušovský should resign from the election. This was related to the fact that P. Hrušovský gradually fell from 18 % to 7 % in the surveys. Therefore, some politicians expressed the opinion that it was high time for Hrušovský to support one of his opponents, who gained more percent in public opinion polls. The SDKÚ mentioned in particular M. Kňažko in this respect. Similar voices were heard in Most. According to a survey by Focus, only half of the voters of the KDH wanted to vote for Hrušovský, he would get the vote of only every sixth supporter of the SDKÚ and only every twentieth supporter of Most would vote for him. The discussions in the SDKÚ and Most also indicated that it would be better for the right if, in addition to Hrušovský, J. Čarnogurský and Gy. Bárdos from the SMK resigned as well. Bárdos rejected similar deliberations and said that he certainly did not consider resigning.<sup>434</sup> According to political scientist M. Klus, Hrušovský's preferences were certainly greatly influenced by the announcement of Gy. Bárdos's candidacy, given that he, as a candidate of Hungarian nationality, took away part of the votes that Hrušovský would normally receive from the supporters of Most-Híd. According to Klus, the problem was certainly that even the parties that eventually supported Hrušovský were not initially identified with him. This was also evidenced by the fact that some SDKÚ-DS MP signed the candidacy of other candidates, for example for M. Kňažko and Gy. Bárdos.<sup>435</sup> According to surveys, Gy. Bárdos had a problem with voters as well. The detailed results

431 *Webnoviny*, 4. 1. 2014, Bárdos má vo voľbách zviditeľniť značku SMK, myslí si Bugár. <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/bardos-ma-vo-volbach-zviditelnit-z/773746-clanok.html>

432 *Sme*, 9. 1. 2014, Bárdos stihol vyzbierať podpisy a podal kandidatúru na prezidenta.

433 *Pravda*, 10. 1. 2014, Veľký súboj o Prezidentský palác sa začína.

434 *Sme*, 27. 2. 2014, Hrušovskému neveria vlastní.

435 *Aktuálne*, 10. 2. 2014, Hrušovský sa v prieskumoch potápa. Na chrbát mu dýcha aj Mezenská. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/hrusovsky-sa-v-prieskumoch-potapa-na-chrbat-mu-dycha-aj-mezenska/slovensko/politika/>

of Focus survey showed that only half of the SMK sympathizers and only a third of Most-Híd supporters wanted to vote for Bárdos. According to the survey, there were many more non-voters and undecided voters in the Hungarian community before the presidential election. While about a third of Slovaks interviewed did not want to vote or did not know whom they would vote for, in the case of Hungarians it was half of the surveyed. According to the survey, the voters of Most-Híd did not want to vote for P. Hrušovský either, and they wanted to give their votes to A. Kiska or M. Kňažko. Regarding this, Hungarian intellectual and psychiatrist P. Hunčík said that he also sees the reason why they do not vote for Bárdos in the disputes between the SMK and Most-Híd. *“The mutual animosity is such that the mere fact that Bárdos is Hungarian is not enough to appeal to the voters of Most. They feel offended by what the SMK did to Most.”* According to Hunčík, this is also why the turnout of Hungarians would probably not be high. The reason for the moods in the community, according to the head of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Slovakia, K. Petőcz, was the general feeling that no one stands up for the community properly. Another reason might be the fact that although in 2009 the SMK and the community stood strongly behind I. Radičová, the elections did not turn out as they had hoped. *“They are disappointed and do not see any benefit for them.”* According to preferences, Bárdos had little chance. Editor-in-Chief of *Új Szó* N. Molnár explained the Hungarians’ hesitation by saying that Bárdos, who is acceptable to them, has no chance to get to the second round and that they did not want to vote for Hrušovský, who was supported by Most.<sup>436</sup>

As in the 2012 parliamentary elections, the non-standard campaign in favour of Gy. Bárdos was prepared by the Rákóczi Society (Rákóczi szövetség),<sup>437</sup> which supports Hungarians living in the territory of the former Kingdom of Hungary. The organization expressed their affiliation by wanting to support Slovak regional or self-governing educational institutions in the municipalities where the votes for this candidate would reach the number of people of the Hungarian minority living in the municipality. The honorary chairman of the society, J. Halzl, wrote this in a letter to the parents of children who lived in the mixed area. Regarding the initiative, Bárdos said that he could not see anything wrong with it. *“I don’t know the exact amount, so I can’t say if it can influence people. However, the voter is not a fool and can decide for himself. This organization is well-known, and if it wants to motivate voters in this way, I don’t see a problem with that.”* However, according to constitutional lawyer J. Drgonc, it would be vote-buying and that contradicts the Constitution.<sup>438</sup>

The first round of elections took place on 15 March 2014. The winner was R. Fico with 28.01 % of the vote, followed by the independent candidate A. Kiska, who

436 *Sme*, 28. 2. 2014, Maďari nevedia, koho voliť.

437 The Society is also involved in promoting historical memory, in Slovakia it pays special attention to the memory of János Esterházy, a controversial politician from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, post-war Slovak legislation and problematic places in Slovak and Hungarian history. The chairman of the company is Cs. Csongor and one of the Vice-chairmen is P. Őry.

438 *Pravda*, 12. 3. 2014, Ak budú voliť Bárdosa, vraj dostanú peniaze.



won 24.01 % of the electorate. They were followed by R. Procházka with 21.24 %, M. Kňažko with 12.86 %, Gy. Bárdos with 5.10 %, P. Hrušovský with 3.33 %. Other candidates received less than three % of the vote. Voter turnout was only 43.4 %.<sup>439</sup>

Candidate of the SMK for the post of President of the Slovak Republic Gy. Bárdos said that he was satisfied with the election result after the first round of elections. He also said that achieving this result was not easy. *“You know very well how other representatives of the Hungarian community reacted, whom they supported, so my result is good.”*<sup>440</sup> Gy. Bárdos won in the districts of Dunajská Streda, Komárno, Nové Zámky and Rimavská Sobota. Bárdos managed to get a close majority only in Dunajská Streda and Komárno. In districts such as Šaľa and Galanta, he was surpassed by A. Kiska, who was also elected as a promising challenger of R. Fico by many Hungarians. Bárdos also lost votes due to the low mobilization of Hungarian voters. Turnout in all districts of southern Slovakia was visibly lower than the national average, and the districts of Komárno, Rimavská Sobota and Dunajská Streda were among one with the lowest turnout.<sup>441</sup> Political scientist L. Öllös stated that *“a large part of Hungarian voters did not participate in the elections and a significant percentage voted for others. However, this is not an exceptional situation for the Hungarians, they do not choose only on the basis of nationality.”* RHS spokesman G. Tokár said that Bárdos had a rather symbolic position in the election. *“Voters were aware that he could not win, and if they gave him a vote, it would only be a protest against the system, against the position of the minority in Slovakia. Therefore, they had a weaker motivation to participate in the election.”* According to Tokár, those who did not vote had been frustrated and dissatisfied with political development for a long time and knew that the vote for the Hungarian candidate would probably not change that. Part of those who went to the polls preferred to support the Slovak candidate, who had a better chance of getting to the second round.<sup>442</sup>

The election of P. Hrušovský as the joint candidate of the People’s Platform proved to be a mistake. The elections showed that the more liberal SDKÚ voters and the Hungarian voters of Most-Híd refused to accept him as their candidate, and to a much greater extent they voted for R. Procházka, A. Kiska and in the south of Slovakia also for Gy. Bárdos. Not only did Hrušovský not succeed in any region, but he did not manage to win in a single district.<sup>443</sup> After the election, the chairman of Most-Híd, B. Bugár, said that two weeks before the first round of the presidential election, Most-Híd recommended the presidential candidate P. Hrušovský to withdraw his candidacy as his support was declining, but he refused. Bugár further stated that some votes of Most-Híd voters went for the SMK candidate Gy. Bárdos. *“In the first round, most*

439 *Pravda*, 16. 3. 2014, Do 2. kola prezidentských volieb postupuje Fico a Kiska, rozdiel je len 4 %.

440 *Teraz*, 16. 3. 2014, Oficiálne výsledky: R. Fico a A. Kiska zaberajú o prezidentské kreslo. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/vysledky-1kola-prezidentskych-volieb-201/77597-clanok.html>

441 *Sme*, 17. 3. 2014, Kde získali najviac a kde najmenej.

442 *Pravda*, 18. 3. 2014, Bárdos Maďarov nespojil.

443 *Pravda*, 17. 3. 2014, Analýza: Bašty nemusia byť isté.; *Sme*, 17. 3. 2014, Kde získali najviac a kde najmenej.

of the supporters of Most-Híd voted with their hearts, and we expect them to vote with their brains in the second round.” He announced that Most would support A. Kiska in the second round.<sup>444</sup>

In the second round of the presidential election, the SMK left the decision to the voters and did not support any of the candidates. The SMK also stated that in the finishing election campaign, the so-called Hungarian card appeared to a much lesser extent than in the previous ones.

*“We are convinced that this is due to the fact that we had our own candidate for the post of the President of the Republic, or rather that we did not express our support without conditions.”*<sup>445</sup>

The second round of the presidential elections was on 29 March 2014. The winner of the second round of elections was A. Kiska, who won 59.32 % of the votes. R. Fico received 40.61 % of the vote in the election. Compared to the first round, the turnout increased and reached 50.45 %.<sup>446</sup> Kiska had the best result in Dunajská Streda, where he won the votes of 92.74 % of voters. Kiska also achieved a result of over 70 % in the districts of Komárno and Šaľa. He thus managed to win significantly in the districts with the Hungarian minority, even though he was not officially supported by the SMK or Gy. Bárdos.<sup>447</sup>

### **Presidential elections 2019**

In 2019, the latest elections of the President of the Slovak Republic took place. This time, both Most-Híd and the SMK nominated their candidate in the presidential race. The fact that both sides had their own candidate was not related to a real effort to fill this position, but rather to the preferences of both parties. The SMK had long been well below 5 % in surveys, and Most was above 5 %, but only very closely. As both parties tried to reach the same voter, they felt that they could only win by nominating a presidential candidate. What L. Sólymos stated as the reason for B. Bugár’s candidacy, that it was time for a minority candidate to run for the president with a chance to succeed, was no longer important. It was important to address Hungarian voters who would decide between two Hungarian candidates and hope that they would choose their party in the parliamentary elections too.<sup>448</sup>

The SMK originally announced that they would select their presidential candidate from the four nominees: P. Csáky, MEP; J. Menyhárt, Chairman of the SMK; P. Őry, Chairman of the Republican Council of the SMK; and L. Miklós, Minister

444 *Aktuality*, 16. 3. 2014, Prezidentské voľby 2014: Béla Bugár odporučil Pavlovi Hrušovskému, aby stiahol kandidatúru. <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/249272/prezidentske-volby-2014-bela-bugar-odporucil-pavlovi-hrusovskemu-aby-stiahol-kandidaturu/>

445 *Teraz*, 26. 3. 2014, SMK neodporučila, koho voliť, rozhodnutie necháva na voličov. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/smk-prezident-volby/79021-clanok.html>

446 Kiska zvíťazil s náskokom, Fico nezískal ani jedno krajské mesto. <https://www.ta3.com/clanok/1037608/kiska-zvitazil-s-naskokom-fico-neziskal-ani-jedno-krajske-mesto.html>>.

447 *Pravda*, 31. 3. 2014, Analýza: Kiska zrušil červenú mapu.

448 *Denník N*, 11. 6. 2018, Morvay, P. Bugár kandiduje proti SMK.

of the Environment. Before the Republican Congress, P. Csáky stated that he did not intend to run. According to Csáky, the SMK was obliged to offer their voters a good presidential candidate so that they would have a reason to participate in the elections. However, he realized that the real chances of a minority candidate in elections for head of state were not great. He also said that he would not support Most-Híd candidate.<sup>449</sup> Of the original four candidates mentioned in the SMK, only one remained before the congress in Dunajská Streda.<sup>450</sup> The party's chairman J. Menyhárt became the SMK's candidate for the presidential election. He stated that the SMK wants to show that they have the power to nominate their own delegate of Hungarian nationality, who will represent their interests.<sup>451</sup> However, as stated by P. Morvay, the parties in Slovakia usually (with the exception of Smer-SD) do not send their leaders and the most famous politicians into the fight for the President, especially if there is a danger that they could really win. It would mean an improvement for the politician, but the party would lose the most attractive face on the list of candidates. In this case, however, it was clear that none of the candidates had a chance of winning, and the campaign was primarily to promote the candidate and the party that nominated him. And thus it happened that Slovak Hungarians could choose from two of their own candidates.<sup>452</sup>

There were 15 candidates that took part in the presidential race. Already before the first round of elections, the SMK candidate J. Menyhárt resigned in favour of R. Mistrík, who later resigned in favour of Z. Čaputová.<sup>453</sup> The first round of the presidential elections took place on 16 March 2019 and was won by Z. Čaputová, who received the support of 40.57 % of voters, followed by M. Šefčovič, who gained only 18.66 %. They were followed by Š. Harabin with a gain of 14.34 %, M. Kotleba with 10.39 %, F. Mikloško with 5.72 %, B. Bugár with 3.1 %, M. Krajniak with 2.77 % and E. Chmelár with 2.74 %. The other candidates received less than one percent of the vote. Turnout in the first round reached 48.73 %.<sup>454</sup>

Béla Bugár won only 3.1 % of the vote in the elections and, as the commentator of *Sme* P. Tkačenko wrote, “*for this type of candidacy, it is crucial not to embarrass yourself.*” Bugár could not count on the support of other political parties and their voters. As it turned out in the election, Bugár was probably not supported by the voters of Most-Híd either.<sup>455</sup> The second round of elections took place on 30 March

449 *Aktuality*, 31. 7. 2018, Pál Csáky sa rozhodol nekandidovať v prezidentských voľbách. <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/611304/pal-csaky-sa-rozhodol-nekandidovat-v-prezidentskych-volbach/>

450 *Aktuality*, 29. 9. 2018, SMK rozhodne o svojom prezidentskom kandidátovi. <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/627832/smk-rozhodne-o-svojom-prezidentskom-kandidatovi/>

451 *Teraz*, 29. 9. 2018, SMK stavia do prezidentských volieb Józsefa Menyhárta. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/dunajska-streda-smk-stavia-do-preziden/351649-clanok.html>

452 *Denník N*, 1. 10. 2018. Morvay, P. Kazit' si povest' spoluprácou s SMK je zbytočné.

453 *Sme*, 19. 2. 2019, Líder SMK Menyhárt sa vzdal kandidatúry v prospech Mistríka.

454 *Pravda*, 16. 3. 2019, Prezidentské voľby: Do druhého kola postúpila Zuzana Čaputová a Maroš Šefčovič.

455 *Sme*, 11. 6. 2018, Tkačenko, P. Bugárova najväčšia chyba.

2019. The winner of the elections was Z. Čaputová, who won the vote of 58.40 % of voters. M. Šefčovič won 41.59 % of the votes. The turnout was only 41.79 %.<sup>456</sup>

## Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic

### *Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic 2006*

The elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic (NC SR) were held early on 17 June 2006. Smer-SD won the election, winning 29.14 % of the valid votes. The SDKÚ came in second with 18.35 % of the vote. In the election, the SNS won 11.73 % of the votes and the SMK 11.68 % of the votes (20 seats). The HZDS also got to the NC SR with 8.79 % of the votes of voters and the KDH that gained 8.31 % of the votes. The turnout was 54.67 %.<sup>457</sup> Due to the lower turnout, the percentage of the SMK was even better in these elections than in the 1998 and 2002 elections. The turnout in the predominantly Hungarian districts was higher than in other districts but lower than in the previous parliamentary election.<sup>458</sup> The SMK gained the votes particularly in ethnically mixed territories. The party won in 11 districts. They achieved the best result in the district of Dunajská Streda (86.3 %).<sup>459</sup> The President of the Slovak Republic, I. Gašparovič, entrusted the formation of the government to the chairman of the victorious party, R. Fico. The new governing coalition consisted of Smer-SD, the SNS and the HZDS.<sup>460</sup>

### *Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic 2010*

In the parliamentary elections in 2010, two political parties competed for the voters of Hungarian nationality, focusing mainly on the Hungarian voter. In addition to the SMK, the newly formed Most-Híd led by B. Bugár also took part in the elections. The overall success of Most was clearly helped by the fact that about one third of the candidates were Slovaks.<sup>461</sup> *“For the SMK, voters of Hungarian nationality remained the only target group addressed, for Most-Híd they were central, but there was a considerable intersection.”*<sup>462</sup>

456 Štatistický úrad SR. <https://volby.statistics.sk/prez/prez2019/sk/data03.html>

457 Štatistický úrad SR. <<http://volby.statistics.sk/NR SR/NR SR2006/slov/obvod/results/tab3.jsp.htm>>.

458 KOPEČEK, L. *Politické strany na Slovensku 1989 až 2006*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2007, p. 474.

459 KRIVÝ, V. Volby v roku 2006. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2006. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky 2007, p. 116.

460 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2006. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky 2007, p. 39-40.

461 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj, legislatíva, právny štát a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2010...*, p. 93.

462 GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ, O. – KRIVÝ, V. Vzorce voličského správania. In KRIVÝ, V. (ed.). *Ako sa mení slovenská spoločnosť*. Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV, 2013, p. 278.

The so-called Hungarian card was also drawn in the pre-election period, mainly due to the national policy of Fidesz in Hungary. The possibility to apply for Hungarian citizenship for Slovak Hungarians raised concerns on the Slovak side. Before the election, almost all political parties addressed the issue, including the election leaders of the two strongest parties, R. Fico and I. Radičová, who spoke also about Slovak-Hungarian relations and dual citizenship in the pre-election discussions. However, Fico used the cooperation of the former government with the SMK against his opponent, as well as the fact that the head of Fidesz, V. Orbán, expressed his support for Radičová before the presidential election. Radičová replied to Fico: *“I never expressed my support for Mr. Orbán. If he said that, I can’t take away his opinion.”*<sup>463</sup>

The elections held on 12 June 2010 were clearly won by Smer-SD with 34.79 % of the vote, the SDKÚ-DS won 15.42 % of the vote, the SaS won 12.14 % of the vote, Most-Híd 8.12 %, the KDH 6.52 % and the SNS 5.07 % of the vote. The HZDS, which won 4.32 %, and the SMK, which won only 4.33 % of the vote, did not get into parliament.<sup>464</sup> The turnout was 58.83 % of eligible voters.<sup>465</sup> Despite the fact that before the elections it was considered unlikely that the SMK and Most-Híd would get to the NC SR, few people assumed that the SMK would remain outside the parliament. However, the number of MP of Hungarian nationality decreased dramatically, as part of the new members of Most-Híd were Slovaks.<sup>466</sup> The historic success was recorded by the OKS, whose four leading candidates got into the parliament on the list of Most-Híd.<sup>467</sup>

The SMK won the highest number of votes in only one district (Štúrovo), while Most-Híd won in four districts (Dunajská Streda, Komárno, Galanta, Šaľa).

*“In the 2010 election, 78 % of the voters of Most-Híd were of Hungarian nationality, in the case of the SMK it was 94 %. According to the post-election survey, Hungarian voters split between the two parties, with the majority of Hungarian voters – 61 % – voting for Most-Híd, the smaller part of 22 % voted for the SMK.”*<sup>468</sup>

The majority of the voters of Most-Híd were members of the Hungarian national minority, but there was a relatively large number of Slovaks among the party’s voters. Most-Híd was successful especially in the Trnava, Nitra but also Košice and Bratislava regions. When comparing the election results of the SMK in 2006 and the SMK and Most-Híd in 2010, the largest increase in the share was seen in the Bratislava

463 *Hospodárske noviny*, 31. 5. 2010, Fico už vie, ako chutí výhra nad Radičovou.

464 *Štatistický úrad SR*. [https://volby.statistics.sk/NR SR/NR SR2010/sr/tab1.jsp@lang=sk.htm](https://volby.statistics.sk/NR%20SR/NR%20SR2010/sr/tab1.jsp@lang=sk.htm)

465 *Štatistický úrad SR*. [https://volby.statistics.sk/NR SR/NR SR2010/sr/tab1.jsp@lang=sk.htm](https://volby.statistics.sk/NR%20SR/NR%20SR2010/sr/tab1.jsp@lang=sk.htm); *Sme*, 14. 6. 2010, Petöcz, K. Náhodné okolnosti.

466 *Aktuality*, 14. 6. 2010, Krivošík, L. Komentár: Bez pokory pravica nedovláadne.

467 GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ, O. – KRIVÝ, V. Vzorce voličského správania. In KRIVÝ, V. (ed.). *Ako sa mení slovenská spoločnosť*. Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV, 2013, p. 278.

468 KRIVÝ, V. Parlamentné voľby 2010. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2010. Správa o stave spoločnosti a demokracie a o trendoch na rok 2011*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2011, p. 112.

Region.<sup>469</sup> Most gained as many as 28.8 % of the votes in districts with less than 10 % of Hungarian citizens. The rest of the votes were won by Most in the districts where the representation of the Hungarian minority is over 10 %.<sup>470</sup>

According to G. Mesežnikov, the electoral failure of the SMK was also caused by the belief of the party's leaders that they would definitely get into parliament because they have a "strong enough electorate." The offensive campaign of the leaders of the SMK against Most-Híd could have also been perceived as a problem by part of the Hungarian voters. In their campaign, the SMK focused almost exclusively on the fight against Most in the districts with the predominant Hungarian minority.<sup>471</sup> "More moderate attitudes of Most-Híd pushed the SMK into differentiating and thus to more radical positions. This was reflected, among other things, in the fact that the vast majority of the SMK's campaign, including billboards, was only in the Hungarian language. The SMK also used a negative offensive campaign against their opponent."<sup>472</sup> The excessive connection of the SMK to Fidesz might have also played a role in the diversion of voters from the SMK. Some voters perceived the SMK as the extended hand of V. Orbán. Additionally, some voters of Hungarian nationality were convinced that their problem could be more likely solved in Slovakia where they live than in Hungary.<sup>473</sup> Budapest made no secret of the fact that they considered the SMK their main partner on the Slovak political scene, not the "mixed" Most. The SMK also emphasized their connection to Budapest in their campaign. Before the election, Hungarian government officials promised to give HUF 50 million to Slovak municipalities affected by the flood and that these funds will be distributed through the SMK. Before the election, it was announced by the Hungarian Ambassador to Slovakia A. Heizer, who spoke "on behalf" of the Deputy Prime Minister Zs. Semjen, who was to come and announce it.

This was perceived as inappropriate interference in the election campaign not only by the Slovak side but also by Most-Híd.

Many voters of Hungarian nationality were also discouraged by Csáky's tough position after the dispute over dual citizenship. One of the elements of the national policy of Fidesz in Hungary allowed Slovak Hungarians to apply for Hungarian citizenship, which stirred a wave of unrest on the Slovak side and the SMK was the only political party that did not reject the so-called Hungarian card. However, according to available surveys, the voters did not want any confrontation with the Slovak majority.<sup>474</sup>

469 These are the district of: Senec, Dunajská Streda, Galanta, Komárno, Levice, Nové Zámky, Šaľa, Lučenec, Revúca, Rimavská Sobota, Veľký Krtíš, Košice – okolie, Michalovce, Rožňava and Trebišov. KRIVÝ, V. *Slovenské voľby '12. Čo im predchádzalo, postoje, výsledky*. Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV, 2012, p. 95.

470 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Slovenské voľby 2010 – Keď víťazstvo znamená porážku. In *Infovoľby.sk*. <<http://www.infovoľby.sk/index.php?base=data/parl/2010/analyzy/1276865665.txt>>.

471 GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ, O. – KRIVÝ, V. Vzorce voličského správania. In KRIVÝ, V. (ed.). *Ako sa mení slovenská spoločnosť...*, p. 278.

472 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Slovenské voľby 2010 – Keď víťazstvo znamená porážku...

473 *Pravda*, 14. 6. 2010, Analýza: Fico do opozície, Mečiar do minulosti.

474 *Aktuality*, 14. 6. 2010, Krivošík, L. Komentár: Bez pokory pravica nedovláadne.

The SMK mainly blamed the party's chairman, P. Csáky, for the election failure. Shortly after the election, the SMK leaders resigned. Csáky attributed the failure of the SMK to the fact that society wanted a change. He also stated that he did not regret the separation from B. Bugár, who got to the NC SR with over 8 %. After the election, former MP K. Sarkózy said that she thought the party was harmed by the chairman's behaviour.<sup>475</sup> In the pre-election period, the chairman of the SMK, P. Csáky, received invitations to pre-election round tables, which, however, were also to be attended by the chairman of the SNS, J. Slota. At the time, a spokeswoman for the SMK told the press that the SMK politicians would not take part in discussions or negotiations with politicians and political parties that did not meet the criteria of European democracy, and Csáky refused to participate.<sup>476</sup> Sarkózy further stated that the voters were misled. "They thought that the SMK would definitely get into the Parliament, so they probably preferred to vote for Most. But the SMK did not get in and half of the MP in Most are Slovak."<sup>477</sup> After the election, political analyst Baránek said that he saw the future of the SMK only in connection with Most-Híd and B. Bugár. However, the SMK politicians ruled out the connection with Most-Híd immediately after the election. Only K. Sarkózy admitted that the division into two parties was a mistake. "At the time more of us pointed this out, and it turned out that we were right."<sup>478</sup>

After the election, R. Fico was unable to form a governing coalition, and I. Radičová formed the government.<sup>479</sup>

### *Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic 2012*

Vote on the so-called Bailout Fund proved fatal to the government which included Most-Híd. Prime Minister I. Radičová decided to combine the vote on this issue with the vote of confidence, and Most fully supported Radičová's decision. However, three representatives from OKS refused to approve it. The party perceived this refusal as a violation of the loyalty of the OKS members, which subsequently caused Most-Híd to terminate their cooperation with the OKS in the next election period.<sup>480</sup>

Before the 2012 election, Most-Híd also opened their list of candidates to the SMK members. However, the SMK rejected such an offer due to the fact that regional associations demanded equal cooperation, i.e. the formation of a pre-election coalition with Most. Bugár refused such an alliance, and J. Berényi responded with a letter in which he suggested that they sit at the negotiating table and look for a solution not to lose the votes of the Hungarian minority. "We are refusing negotiations on how we

475 *Sme*, 14. 6. 2010, Csáky končí, SMK hľadá šéfa.

476 *Hospodárske noviny*, 8. 6. 2010, Pál Csáky si s Jánom Slotom za diskusný stôl nesadne.

477 *Sme*, 14. 6. 2010, Csáky končí, SMK hľadá šéfa.

478 *Sme*, 14. 6. 2010, Csáky končí, SMK hľadá šéfa.

479 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj, legislatíva, právny štát a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2010...*, p. 45.

480 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vývoj systému politických strán, stranická politika a voľby '12. In KRI-VÝ, V. *Slovenské voľby '12. Čo im predchádzalo, postoje, výsledky*. Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV, 2012, p. 19-21.

want to cooperate,” the head of the parliamentary group of Most, L. Solymos, responded to the SMK initiative. According to political scientist L. Öllös, the majority of voters also wanted such a scenario but did not see a real possibility that the two competing political entities would agree on a joint program. Öllös expected that both parties would go to the elections separately and thought that Most had a better chance of getting into parliament.<sup>481</sup> Solymos said he considered SMK’s talk of cooperation to be just a game before the election.<sup>482</sup>

The parties subsequently accused each other of dishonest offers for cooperation, and as a result, Most eventually rejected the proposal to form an electoral coalition and the SMK rejected the offer of Most to be on their list of candidates. In the end, the leaders of both parties did not discuss possible cooperation at all. “*It is a theatre for voters,*” said G. Gál, a member of Most leadership, about the SMK’s proposal. The SMK said that Most were afraid. “*It cannot be ruled out that, thanks to preferential votes, more of our representatives than those of Most would get into parliament through a common list of candidates,*” said the SMK vice-chairman Gy. Bárdos. In the end, both parties ran in the elections separately. Most also wanted to address the Slovak voter in the election, so they tried to add personalities who could attract more voters. For example, they included the Mayor of Martin, Andrej Hrnčiar, as a candidate, and again included I. Švejna and R. Chmel as candidates. F. Šebej, who left the OKS, was to be a reinforcement for the party.<sup>483</sup>

The SMK also wanted to attract voters with new faces. The party’s chairman, J. Berényi, said that only eight places in the top twenty on the list of candidates for the elections in March 2012 belong to candidates who had already been members of the NC SR. After the lost elections in 2010, the ambitions of the SMK were also more modest. “*We are trying to return to the Parliament and everything above five percent is a great success for us.*” The party also wanted to base their election program on topics related to economic issues, regional development, social affairs and health. According to Farkas, the SMK wanted to focus on the southern region of Slovakia, which was neglected by the government.<sup>484</sup> However, it must be said that the SMK, with their pre-election rhetoric, only tried to fill a gap, as the ‘national card’ has always dominated the social agenda in the south.<sup>485</sup>

The Hungarian public television M1 also entered the pre-election campaign in Slovakia, when it broadcast the shot of the Rákóczi Society in the prime-time after the evening news, in which it urged the Hungarians from “Felvidék” to go to the polls in the parliamentary elections on Saturday. “*The fate of people, as well as their survival, are in our hands. Take advantage of your civil rights, take part in the elections*

481 *Hospodárske noviny*, 7. 11. 2011, Bugár stavil na Slovákov.

482 *Aktuálne*, 9. 11. 2011, Solymos: Most-Híd a SMK zrejme do volieb spoločne nepôjdu. <http://aktualne.centrum.sk/domov/politika/clanek.phtml?id=1246504>

483 *Hospodárske noviny*, 18. 11. 2011, Most a SMK sa nedohodli. Do volieb idú ako rivali.

484 *Webnoviny*, 3. 12. 2011, MK láka voličov na nové tváre, aj na futbalistu a hudobníka. <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/smk-laka-volicov-na-nove-tvare-aj-n/436407-clanok.html>

485 *Pravda*, 9. 3. 2012, Krno, M. Béla Bugár Stálica na slovenskom nebi.



and, as many of you as possible, vote for the candidates from the Hungarian community.” However, the advertisement did not mention any specific party. The Society also issued a letter “to the parents of children from Slovak-Hungarian schools”, in which it urged parents to go to the polls. No specific party was mentioned in the letter either. The letter called the elections a turning point for the interests of Hungarians in Slovakia and recommended electing a “party with Hungarian interests.” Given that the Hungarian Government recognized only the SMK as the party representing the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, it was not even necessary to mention the name of a particular political party. The chairman of Most-Híd B. Bugár also responded to the campaign in the debate of the daily *Új Szó*, when he reacted to the statements of J. Berényi from the SMK that his party was ignored by the Slovak media: “The SMK was the only party with a campaign in the Hungarian media that could perhaps not be possible to pay for.”<sup>486</sup> The secretary of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zs. Németh, also intervened in the election campaign, recommended electing the SMK and said that the Hungarian government considered it desirable for the SMK to succeed in the election. The chairman of Most-Híd, B. Bugár, drew attention to this statement. Németh justified this claim by saying that the existence of a system of Hungarian institutions is a necessary condition for the preservation of Hungarians in Slovakia.<sup>487</sup>

The winner of the elections was Smer-SD with 44.41 % of the votes. The party did not need a coalition partner, as it had 83 seats and could form a “one-colour government.” Other parties that got into the Parliament were the KDH with 8.82 %, OĽANO with 8.55 %, Most-Híd with 6.89 %, the SDKÚ-DS with 6.09 %, SaS with 5.88 %, which meant a relatively diverse opposition. Both the SMK with only 4.28 % and the SNS with 4.55 % of the votes remained outside the NC SR.<sup>488</sup> Most, which served in the opposition, won 13 seats.<sup>489</sup>

The turnout in the elections was 59.11 %. Similarly to the previous election, Most-Híd was the most successful party aimed at attracting Hungarian voters, despite the fact that the SMK won the highest number of votes in two districts (Komárno, Štúrovo), while Most-Híd won in only one district (Dunajská Streda). The electoral success of Most-Híd was also influenced by the fact that they were able to get electoral support even in districts where the SMK was never able to attract a larger number of voters. In the parliamentary elections in 2010 and 2012, the SMK won less than one percent of the vote in up to 33 districts, while Most-Híd won less than one percent of voters in the 2010 elections in five districts and in the 2012 elections in nine districts.<sup>490</sup> Since its foundation, Most-Híd has promoted moderation in submitting requests con-

486 *Sme*, 7. 3. 2012, Kampaň sa k nám šíri aj z Maďarska.

487 *Hospodárske noviny*, 8. 3. 2012, Bugár: Maďari zasahujú do našich volieb.

488 *Štatistický úrad SR*. [http://volby.statistics.sk/NR\\_SR/NR\\_SR2012/graf/graf1sr.jsp@lang=sk.htm](http://volby.statistics.sk/NR_SR/NR_SR2012/graf/graf1sr.jsp@lang=sk.htm)

489 KRIVÝ, V. *Slovenské voľby '12. Čo im predchádzalo, postoj, výsledky*. Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV, 2012, p. 23.

490 *Štatistický úrad SR*. <http://volby.statistics.sk/>

cerning minority issues, which has enabled them to address other than Hungarian voters more effectively.<sup>491</sup> Although the party also focused on the Slovak voter as well, it was strongly dependent on voters of Hungarian nationality.<sup>492</sup>

The SMK proved to be a party strongly tied to the ethnically mixed territory of southern and south-eastern Slovakia, which recorded a higher number of votes only in the south and southeast of Slovakia, while Most-Híd managed to avoid restrictions resulting from focusing on one numerically limited minority when they could gain more voters in the ethnically mixed territory of southern and south-eastern Slovakia, but at the same time, they received relatively higher numbers of votes than the SMK in other electoral districts.<sup>493</sup>

In the 2012 parliamentary election, Most won up to 31.5 % of the vote in districts with less than 10 % of Hungarian citizens. The rest of the votes were won by Most in the districts where the representation of the Hungarian minority is over 10 %.<sup>494</sup>

Most-Híd lost almost 30,000 votes in the 2012 elections compared to the elections in 2010. Political scientist L. Öllös, said that they lost, for example, the voters disgusted by the disintegration of the government. *“They probably also have big social problems and the previous period did not address it.”* However, Most-Híd also lost in Bratislava. They were not very successful in Martin either, although they put the Mayor of Martin on their list of candidates. Four Slovaks from Most’s list of candidates won the seats in the parliament, A. Hrnčiar, R. Chmel, I. Švejna and F. Šebej.<sup>495</sup> *“The competition with the SMK for the position of the ‘most genuine’ representative of the interests of the Hungarian minority eventually lured some Hungarian voters away from Most, but not in favour of the SMK, but in favour of the non-voter camp. According to election research, almost 60,000 Most-Híd voters from 2010 did not vote two years later.”*<sup>496</sup>

The voter support of the SMK significantly weakened after the establishment of Most-Híd. In the battle for voters, Most-Híd clearly gained more voter support in 2010, in all types of municipalities. In the elections in 2012, however, the SMK won more votes in the municipalities with the strongest representation of citizens of Hungarian nationality.<sup>497</sup>

491 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Vnútropolitický vývoj, legislatíva, právny štát a systém politických strán. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2010...*, p. 93.

492 KRIVÝ, V. Parlamentné voľby 2010. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2010...*, p. 116.

493 Štatistický úrad SR. [http://volby.statistics.sk/NR\\_SR/NR\\_SR2012/graf/graf1sr.jsp?lang=sk.htm](http://volby.statistics.sk/NR_SR/NR_SR2012/graf/graf1sr.jsp?lang=sk.htm)

494 KRIVÝ, V. *Slovenské voľby '12. Čo im predchádzalo, postoje, výsledky*. Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV, 2012, p. 95.

495 *Sme*, 12. 3. 2012, Most stratil Slovákov aj Maďarov.

496 GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ, O. – KRIVÝ, V. Vzorové voľčského správania. In KRIVÝ, V. (ed.). *Ako sa mení slovenská spoločnosť*. Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV, 2013, p. 278-279.

497 KRIVÝ, V. *Slovenské voľby '12. Čo im predchádzalo, postoje, výsledky*. Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV, 2012, p. 92.

Most Hungarian politicians and the media perceived the failure of the SMK to return to the Slovak parliament as the biggest disappointment of the election. According to experts, it was confirmed that it is beyond the power of the voters of Hungarian nationality to get two parties to the NC SR. Hungarian historian L. Szarka argued that “*the mobilization possibilities of a purely ethnic, regional party are limited.*” According to him, Most, on the other hand, was able to ‘sell’ the emphasis on the dual Slovak and Hungarian identity very well. Opposition parties in Hungary blamed Orbán for losing the votes of a large number of voters of Hungarian nationality. “*The regrettable and brutal interference of Fidesz in the life of compatriot communities struck back and again damaged the Hungarian community,*” said Socialist leader A. Mesterházy. According to him, Orbán’s party deepened the divide between the two parties by favouring the SMK and ignoring Most, and is thus responsible for the failure of one party and the weakening of the other. “*The result of Most proves that voters voted in favour of continuing the Hungarian-Slovak dialogue.*” The Democratic Coalition, the party of former Prime Minister F. Gyurcsány, accused Orbán of driving a wedge between Hungarians in Slovakia and, like the Socialists and the Greens, urged the Government to establish the same cooperation with B. Bugár as with other political groups of foreign Hungarians.<sup>498</sup>

### ***Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic 2016***

The 2016 parliamentary elections (and the next in 2020) were held in an environment of increasing criticism of governments, classical party politics, support for non-systemic parties and ‘image’ based (without values) politicians, but also a struggle to maintain liberal democracy. Liberal democracy, as the basis of the society after 1989, became the target of criticism of movements and new parties. However, many of them based their policies on populism, which, if necessary, does not hesitate to rely on nationalism, chauvinism and focused mainly on migration and migrants, as well as marginalized groups, and is no stranger to anti-minority nationalism or anti-Semitism.

Almost a year before the 2016 election, RHS wanted to initiate negotiations between Most-Híd and the SMK on how to achieve the best result in next year’s parliamentary election. However, Most-Híd eventually refused to participate in the negotiations, on the grounds that the RHS was playing a dirty game. Most-Híd chairman B. Bugár said: “*The round table said that they wanted to be a mediator, but we have information that they are negotiating with the SMK that they should get 9<sup>th</sup> place on the list of candidates for the parliamentary election.*” He also said that he did not like such politicking and the dishonesty of the RHS.<sup>499</sup>

The SMK eventually ran in the elections alone. After publishing the list of candidates, the chairman of the SMK J. Berényi pointed out that the SMK is a renewed party and that there are only four candidates who had already been MP or in the exec-

498 *Pravda*, 13. 3. 2012, Orbán na Slovensku prehrál.

499 *Teraz*, 9. 4. 2015, Most-Híd nepôjde rokovat’ s SMK o budúročných parlamentných voľbách. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/most-hid-smk-parlamentne-volby-2016/129177-clanok.html>

utive among the first thirty candidates. He also commented: *“Our greatest effort is to help the poorer, the weaker and stop the assimilation of Hungarians in Slovakia. Furthermore, we would like to enable the establishment of a right-wing government ...”*<sup>500</sup>

As for the list of candidates of Most-Híd, the non-Hungarian part was slightly “re-inforced”, for example by the constitutional lawyer P. Kresák, the mayor of Rimavská Seč Š. Vavrek, Ruthenian politician P. Krajňák, or M. Dubéci who left Siet’.<sup>501</sup>

A third political party, the MKDA, also competed for the votes of Hungarian voters in this election. Chairman of MKDA Cs. Féher told TASR that the party wanted the cultural and educational autonomy of minorities living in Slovakia. The program aimed to ensure the equal legal status of the Hungarian language in areas inhabited by Hungarians and the preparation of a law on national minorities, the removal of the consequences of the “Beneš Decrees” or the creation of Komárno, Rimavská Sobota and Trebišov counties.<sup>502</sup>

One of the significant topics of the election campaign was also the issue of post-election cooperation of individual political parties with Smer-SD. In response to the fact that Most-Híd did not clearly rule out post-election cooperation with Smer-SD in the campaign, the leader of OĽaNO I. Matovič sent 250,000 Slovak-Hungarian leaflets *“Let’s take justice into our own hands”* to households in southern Slovakia. In these, he begged people to come to the polls, and said: *“If you cannot vote for us for any reason, perhaps even because you don’t like me as a candidate, please come and vote anyway.”* In the leaflet, he advised people to choose from the parties that excluded cooperation with Smer, which, apart from OĽaNO, were only the SaS and the SMK.<sup>503</sup> In the 2016 election campaign, Smer did not draw the “Hungarian card”, it was replaced by social benefit packages and migrants.<sup>504</sup> The new agenda was a sufficient substitute topic. R. Fico could leave the Hungarian card to the SNS, which, in a moderate form orchestrated by A. Danko, in opposition to the aggressive nationalist-chauvinist line of J. Slota, just maintained the topic in political discourse. It was also important for Smer for the SNS to get into Parliament, as it was difficult for Smer to find a coalition partner in the Slovak political spectrum. Due to the moderate national rhetoric of the SNS, it was also possible to look for a coalition partner in Most-Híd.

The elections to the NC SR took place on 5 March 2016. The clear winner of the elections was again Smer-SD, which won 28.28 % of votes, followed by the SaS with 12.10 % of votes, OĽANO with 11.02 % of votes, SNS with 8.64 % of votes, ĽSNS with 8.04 % of votes, Most-Híd 6.50 % of votes (11 seats), Sme rodina 6.62 % of votes, Siet’ with 5.6 % of votes. The SMK won only 4.04 % of the votes in the elections and

500 *Aktuálne*, 27. 2. 2016, SMK sa hlási o slovo. Chce umožniť vznik pravicovej vlády. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/slovensko/politika/smk-chce-umoznit-vznik-pravicovej-vlady.html>

501 *Denník N*, 9. 12. 2015, Morvay, P. Most aj SMK idú po starom.

502 *Teraz*, 14. 2. 2016, MKDA chce kultúrnu a vzdelávaciu autonómiu menšín na Slovensku. <http://www.teraz.sk/import/mkda-chce-kulturnu-a-vzdelavaciu-auton/181837-clanok.html>

503 *Denník N*, 2. 3. 2016, Matovič radí voliť radšej SMK ako Most-Híd.

504 These were effective in 2016, but in 2020 they failed under the burden of corruption cases and the murder of J. Kuciak.

again remained outside the NC SR, the new political party MKDA won only 0.09 % of the votes in the election. The turnout was 59.82 % of eligible voters.<sup>505</sup>

After the official announcement of the results, both Most-Híd and the SMK were disappointed with their results. The chairman of Most-Híd, B. Bugár, assessed that this was a very weak result for the party.<sup>506</sup> The SMK chairman Berényi also expressed his dissatisfaction with the election results. According to Berényi, the goal of the SMK in these elections was to increase the votes, but despite their efforts, they lost about 3,000 votes. Still, he declared that the SMK would not disappear anyway, as it had a very strong and stable electoral base and strong regional structures in southern Slovakia. However, after the party's failure in the election, Berényi decided to resign from the position of the party chairman, and the party was temporarily led by L. Szigeti, the Chairman of the Republican Council of the SMK, until the new election of the chairman.<sup>507</sup>

Sociologist P. Haulík from the MVK agency stated that although Hungarian voters were disciplined in the election, they were divided into two caMP, which weakened them. Bugár said that *“a result below eight percent is not a good result.”* He admitted that they had higher expectations in the party. P. Haulík pointed out that B. Bugár benefited from the fact that for some time he had a relatively large number of Slovak voters and this gave him the prospect of a better election result. Now, however, he lost the majority of Slovak voters, and as far as Hungarian voters are concerned, the division between Most-Híd and the SMK was almost balanced. Haulík also stated that the number of citizens of Hungarian nationality is about 9 % and unless the situation changes, it does not seem realistic that both parties would be able to exceed the 5 % limit.<sup>508</sup>

When comparing the election success of Most-Híd and the SMK in the 15 districts with the largest Hungarian representation, we found that in 2010 and 2012, Most-Híd was much more successful than the SMK. In 2010, the SMK was more successful only in two districts (Veľký Krtíš, Trebišov), in 2012 already in five districts (Komárno, Revúca, Rimavská Sobota, Veľký Krtíš, Trebišov) and in 2016 their success increased even more and they were more successful than Most-Híd in up to 7 districts (Dunajská Streda, Komárno, Levice, Revúca, Rimavská Sobota, Veľký Krtíš, Trebišov). In other districts, Most-Híd was more successful.<sup>509</sup>

After the election, a governing coalition was formed from Smer-SD, the SNS, Most-Híd and Sief. R. Fico became the Prime Minister.<sup>510</sup> B. Bugár justified the decision of Most-Híd to join the coalition by saying that it was necessary to prevent the rise of extremism in Slovakia and that the caretaker government and early elections

505 Štatistický úrad SR. [http://volby.statistics.sk/NR\\_SR/NR\\_SR2016/sk/data02.html](http://volby.statistics.sk/NR_SR/NR_SR2016/sk/data02.html)

506 *Sme*, 6. 3. 2016, Bugár: Sny o proreformnej vláde skončili, dôvodom sú antisystémové strany.

507 *Pravda*, 8. 3. 2016, Berényi odstúpil z funkcie predsedu SMK.

508 *Pravda*, 7. 3. 2016, Maďarský volič je rozdvojený.

509 Štatistický úrad SR. <http://volby.statistics.sk/>

510 Prezident vymenoval novú vládu. Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky. <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/prezident-vymenoval-novu-vladu/>

are not an appropriate solution.<sup>511</sup> Most-Híd got two ministerial posts. L. Sólymos became the Minister of the Environment, L. Žitňanská became the Minister of Justice and at the same time the Deputy Prime Minister. B. Bugár became the Vice-president of the NC SR.<sup>512</sup> The party also appointed Á. Ravasz to the post of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Roma Community.<sup>513</sup> Later, the party also held the post of the Minister of Transport, filled by Á. Érsek. The consequence of Most's entry into the Government was the departure of Vice-chairman Zs. Simon from the party.<sup>514</sup>

An opinion poll conducted by the AKO agency a month after the parliamentary elections showed that the voters of Most-Híd were among the most satisfied with how the party proceeded immediately after the elections until the formation of the new government (33.3 % completely satisfied, 41.2 % rather satisfied). Higher dissatisfaction than satisfaction prevailed among the voters of SMK (25.8 % completely dissatisfied, 25.8 % rather dissatisfied).<sup>515</sup> The Republican Council of Most-Híd also expressed their satisfaction with their decision a year after the election. *"I am convinced that this was the only possible step towards achieving stability and opportunities for the progress of the whole country. In a way, we made a 'sacrifice' for the benefit of Slovakia,"* said party chairman B. Bugár after the meeting, adding that the only other option were early elections, which would not be good for Slovakia. *"I am satisfied with our performance in this government."*<sup>516</sup>

### ***Elections in the National Council of the Slovak Republic 2020***

In the 2020 parliamentary election, the winner was OĽaNO with 25.02 % of the votes. In second place was Smer-SD with 18.29 % of the votes, followed by Sme rodina with 8.24 % of the votes, ĽSNS with 7.97 % of the votes, SaS with 6.22 % of the votes, Za ľudí won 5.77 % of the votes.

Coalition of PS and Spolu with 6.96 % of votes, the KDĽH with 4.65 % of votes and the SNS with 3.16 % of votes did not get into the Parliament. Both Hungarian political parties also remained outside the Parliament. Maďarská komunitná spolupatričnosť (Hungarian Community Solidarity) which joined three parties before the 2020 parlia-

511 *Teraz*, 4. 3. 2017, B. Bugár: vstupom do koalície sme urobili 'obetu' v prospech Slovenska. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/rada-mosta-hid-volby-vuc/247074-clanok.html>

512 Government of the SR from 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016 to 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 <https://www.vlada.gov.sk//vlada-sr-od-24-03-2016-do-20-03-2020/>

513 *Teraz*, 13. 4. 2016, Rómsky splnomocnenec Á. Ravasz je s programovým vyhlásením spokojný. <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/romsky-splnomocnenec-a-ravasz-je-s-pr/191656-clanok.html>

514 *Webnoviny*, 19. 3. 2016, Most-Híd schválil vládu so Smerom, Simon zo strany odchádza. <http://www.webnoviny.sk/parlamentne-volby-2016/clanok/1049457-most-hid-schvalil-vladu-so-smerom-simon-zo-strany-odchadza/>

515 *Teraz.sk*, 16. 4. 2016, Hrabko: zdravotný stav R. Fica môže spôsobiť veľký politický problém. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/hrabko-fico-zdravotny-stav-problem-polit/192106-clanok.html>

516 *Teraz*, 4. 3. 2017, B. Bugár: vstupom do koalície sme urobili 'obetu' v prospech Slovenska. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/rada-mosta-hid-volby-vuc/247074-clanok.html>

mentary elections, the SMK, the Hungarian Forum and Solidarity, won only 3.90 % of the vote and Most-Híd got only 2.05 %.<sup>517</sup>

The case of Most-Híd fulfilled the words of their chairman, B. Bugár, who said before the parliamentary elections in 2012, “*if a right-wing party joins Smer, it will destroy them.*”<sup>518</sup> When Most-Híd joined the Government after the 2016 election, they lost part of the voters because of their cooperation with Smer-SD and the SNS. They later lost other voters due to the party’s decision to support the Government during the political crisis in the spring of 2018 (in connection with the murder of journalist J. Kuciak) and the attitude to corruption scandals associated not only with the government of their coalition partner.

## **Elections to Higher Territorial Units (VÚC)**

### ***Elections to the VÚC in 2005***

Slovakia is divided into eight higher territorial units, namely the Bratislava, Trnava, Trenčín, Nitra, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Košice and Prešov self-governing regions. In the election, voters elect the Chairperson of the Higher Territorial Unit and the members of the Council of the Higher Territorial Unit.<sup>519</sup> Elections to the bodies of self-governing regions in 2005 were characterized by a very low turnout. In the first round of elections, which took place on 26 November 2005, only 18.2 % of eligible voters took part. The second round of elections, in which voters chose the chairperson of the self-governing region, out of the two candidates who received the most votes in the first round, took place on 10 December 2005. The SMK nominated several candidates for the chairperson of the self-governing region. In the Nitra self-governing region, the SMK candidate who applied for the position of chairman of the local government was the former minister, L. Szigeti, and he even advanced to the second round. However, the SMK candidate resigned after a few days, and in the second round of elections, M. Belica from the HZDS-ZSNS-ASV-KSS-ĽB-PSNS coalition and the SDKÚ candidate J. Greššo, who placed third, competed for the post of chairman of the VÚC. In the Banská Bystrica self-governing region, the SMK candidate P. Csúsz finished in third place. In the Košice self-governing region, the SMK candidate R. Múdra finished in fourth place, but Z. Trebuľa, supported also by the SMK in the second round, became the Chairman.<sup>520</sup>

517 *Štatistický úrad SR*. <https://volby.statistics.sk/NR/SR/NR/SR2020/sk/data02.html>

518 *Sme*, 15. 3. 2016, So Smerom môžu skončiť Most i Sief.

519 *The Constitution of the Slovak Republic*. <https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/1992-460>; Act on Self-Government of Higher Territorial Units No. 302/2001 Coll.. <https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2001-302>; Councillors were elected in individual regions by a one-round majority system with multi-member constituencies, while the Presidents were elected by a two-round majority system from all-regional candidates.

520 *Teraz*, 5. 11. 2017, Výsledky doterajších volieb v samosprávnych krajoch. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/vysledky-doterajcich-volieb-v-bratisl/290647-clanok.html>

The SMK themselves won 53 parliamentary seats, i.e. 12.86 % of all parliamentary seats in the elections to the local government in 2005. The party acquired also other councillors as part of coalitions. The party was the most successful in the Trnava self-governing region, where they won 15 seats in the 40-member council (37.5 %). In the Nitra self-governing region, the party gained 17 seats in the 52-member council (32.69 %) and in the Košice self-governing region in the 57-member council, the SMK gained 13 representatives (22.80 %). The SMK was also represented in the 49-member council of the Banská Bystrica self-governing region, where it won eight seats (16.32 %).<sup>521</sup> In the elections in 2001, the SMK won up to 60 seats in the local councils, 31 in the Nitra region, 15 in the Banská Bystrica region and 14 in the Trnava region.<sup>522</sup> The worse result was mainly due to the number of mandates for the SMK in the Nitra region. While in 2001 the inability of Slovak parties to form larger coalitions contributed to the SMK winning most of the redistributed seats, in 2005, thanks to the merger of most Slovak parties into one “big Slovak coalition”, the SMK won “only” 17 seats. *“However, a certain dissatisfaction of some Hungarian voters with the form of representation of the interests of the SMK could have contributed to the weaker result in the regional election, when some corruption and other scandals related to party representatives at the regional and national level were “stirred” in the media before the election.”*<sup>523</sup>

### *Elections to the VÚC in 2005*

Prior to the 2009 election, there was a change in the organisation of constituencies. The division of the Nové Zámky constituency into the Nové Zámky and Štúrovo constituencies was perceived most sensitively in terms of ethnic composition. Another change was the lower number of elected councillors. While there were 412 councillors elected in 2005, only 408 councillors were elected in 2009. The first round of elections took place on 14 November 2009 and the turnout reached 22.9 %. The second round took place on 28 November 2009 and the turnout reached 18.4 %.<sup>524</sup> The SMK and Most-Híd nominated several candidates for the chairman of the self-governing region in the election. In the battle for the position of the chairman of the VÚC in the Bratislava self-governing region, the SMK supported P. Frešo and Most-Híd nominated R. Beňo in the election. P. Frešo (SDKÚ-DS, KDH, SMK, OKS and SaS) advanced to the second round of elections and eventually became the Chairman of the VÚC. In the Trnava self-governing region, G. Gál, who was nominated by Most-Híd, also ran for the position of the chairman of the local government. However, T. Mikuš became the Chairman of the self-governing region in the first round, despite the fact

521 Štatistický úrad SR. <https://volby.statistics.sk/osk/osk2005/slov/results/tab3.jsp.htm>

522 Štatistický úrad SR. <https://volby.statistics.sk/osk/osk2001/webdata/slov/tab/tab2.htm>

523 KOPEČEK, L. *Politické strany na Slovensku 1989 až 2006*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2007, p. 473-474.

524 KRIVÝ, V. *Volby v roku 2009*. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2009. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 2010*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky 2010, p. 137.



that leaflets with the text “Mikuš is collaborating with the Hungarians” appeared in the mailboxes before the election.

The Hungarian card thus became part of the election campaign. Mikuš was an independent candidate with the support of the coalition of Smer, SNS, SZS, HZD and Nová demokracia. However, his candidacy was also openly supported by the SMK. Their Vice-chairman J. Berényi, however, ruled out meeting with Mikuš at a “negotiation”, as stated in the distributed leaflet.<sup>525</sup>

In the Nitra self-governing region, Á. Biró nominated by SMK also applied for the position of chairwoman of the local government. However, in the first round, M. Belica (Smer-SD, SDKÚ-DS, KDH) was elected chairman of the self-governing region in this VÚC. In the Košice self-governing region, Z. Trebuľa was elected chairman in the first round, supported by both the SMK and Most-Híd.<sup>526</sup>

With regard to the election of councillors, the SMK nominated 104 candidates.<sup>527</sup> Even before the election, the chairman of the SMK, P. Csáky, stated that he expected a worse result compared to the previous election, due to a change in some constituencies, but also due to the fact that Most-Híd also competed for Hungarian votes. While in the 2005 elections there were five councillors elected for the SMK in the Nové Zámky district, in the 2009 election, when the former Nové Zámky constituency was divided into two new constituencies: Nové Zámky and Štúrovo, no councillor was elected for the SMK or for Most-Híd in Nové Zámky and only three councillors were elected for the SMK and no councillor for Most-Híd in the Štúrovo district. However, this change only partially explained the decline in the success of the parties oriented on Hungarians.<sup>528</sup>

In 2009, the SMK alone won only 35 seats (8.57 %). The party gained other seats only as part of coalitions. The party was again the most successful in the Trnava self-governing region, where the party occupied 11 seats in the 40-member council (27.5 %). In the Nitra self-governing region, the party won 13 seats in the 54-member regional council (24.07 %) and in the 57-member council of Košice self-governing region they only won four seats (7.01 %). In the 49-member council of the Banská Bystrica self-governing region, the SMK won seven seats (14.28 %). Thus, the number of mandates for the SMK decreased in all self-governing regions, most significantly in the Košice self-governing region. However, Most-Híd won only two councillors (0.49 %) in the election, one in Bratislava and the other in Trnava self-governing region.<sup>529</sup>

525 *Sme*, 10. 11. 2009, v Trnave vytiahli maďarskú kartu.

526 *Teraz*, 5. 11. 2017, Výsledky doterajších volieb v samosprávnych krajoch. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/vysledky-doterajcich-volieb-v-bratisl/290647-clanok.html>

527 KRIVÝ, V. Voľby v roku 2009. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2009...*, p. 142.

528 KRIVÝ, V. Voľby v roku 2009. In KOLLÁR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2009...*, p. 148.

529 *Štatistický úrad SR*. <https://volby.statistics.sk/osk/osk2009/sr/tab3.jsp@lang=sk.htm>

### *Elections to the VÚC 2013*

Before the municipal election, the chairman of the SMK J. Berényi stated that the samples of election notifications sent by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic to local governments in ethnically mixed areas also contain the Hungarian text, but not in the manner and to the extent specified by law. “... *the Slovak text is to be translated in full into Hungarian. However, the samples of the Ministry of the Interior contain only a part of the Slovak text, and that with gross spelling and stylistic errors.*” According to Berényi, it was also unacceptable that the Hungarian text was printed in much smaller letters than the Slovak text. The samples contained not only the text in Slovak and Hungarian but also in the language of four other national minorities. Berényi had no objections to the other languages, but he was bothered by the fact that the Hungarian text was lost in the samples. The SMK wanted to initiate the correction of election notifications at the Ministry of the Interior of the SR. The Ministry of the Interior responded that the notification of the time and place of the elections is prepared as universal information for all municipalities with national minorities, as specified by law. According to the Ministry of the Interior, the content of the notification was drafted in accordance with the Act on the Use of National Minority Languages and, for the first time, contained information in the language of all national minorities, including Hungarian. The Ministry also confirmed that the Slovak text and the translated language versions were typed in the same font size. “*The only difference is that the main Slovak text is in ‘bold’.*”<sup>530</sup>

The first round of elections to self-governing bodies of higher territorial units took place on 9 November 2013. Voter turnout in the first round was 20.11 %. In the second round, which was held on 23 November 2013, the turnout reached 17.29 % of eligible voters.

In 2013, the SMK won 34 seats separately (8.33 %). The party won further councillors as part of coalitions. The party was most successful again in the Trnava self-governing region, where the party won 11 seats (27.5 %) in the 40-member council. In the Nitra self-governing region, the party won 14 seats in the 54-member council (25.92 %) and in the 57-member council in the Košice self-governing region they won four seats (7.01 %). In the council of the Banská Bystrica self-governing region, the SMK won five seats (10.2 %) in the 49-member council. Most-Híd won four councillors (0.98 %) separately in the election, all of them in the Trnava self-governing region. Most-Híd was much more successful in the coalitions.<sup>531</sup> B. Bugár described the election results as a success, as the party gained more councillors than in the previous election. In 2009, Most-Híd gained only two councillors, and in 2013, both individually and in coalitions, they won 17. With regard to the better election result of

530 Teraz, 8. 10. 2013, SMK: Vzory oznámení o voľbách do VÚC nie sú podľa zákona. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/smk-volby-vuc-oznamenia-vzory/60599-clanok.html>

531 Štatistický úrad SR. [https://volby.statistics.sk/osk/osk2013/VUC/Tabulka3\\_sk.html](https://volby.statistics.sk/osk/osk2013/VUC/Tabulka3_sk.html)

the SMK, he said that it should be noted that the SMK had been building structures for 23 years, while Most-Híd only for four years.<sup>532</sup>

There was an interesting situation before the election, especially in Trnava and Nitra. In Trnava, Most-Híd and the SMK each went to the elections with their own candidate for the chairman of the VÚC. Most-Híd supported the candidacy of the former Minister of the Environment J. Nagy and the SMK supported the candidacy of their chairman J. Berényi. There were talks that both parties were aware of the unlikelihood of either of them being elected, and mainly tried to promote their parties before next year's elections into the EP.<sup>533</sup>

J. Berényi, the candidate of the SMK and with declared support of Most-Híd, advanced to the second round, as well as the independent candidate T. Mikuš, who was supported by Smer-SD and several smaller parties. Berényi won 18.33 % of the vote in the first round and Mikuš won 40.04 %.<sup>534</sup> It was certainly difficult for Most to support a candidate of the SMK, given that the SMK focused mainly on Most in their campaign and described them as a virus threatening the entire minority, because of their cooperation with Slovaks and because of Most's program based on the "independence" of Slovak Hungarians from Hungary. The SMK, together with Orbán's Fidesz, also did not support the admission of Most to the European People's Party. However, Most could not avoid supporting Berényi either, as it would be perceived as a problem by a large part of the party's Hungarian voters.<sup>535</sup>

Before the second round of the election of the Chairman of the Trnava self-governing region, Prime Minister R. Fico urged T. Mikuš to mobilize voters. *"If you don't come, others will come,"* Fico said, but refused the notion that he was drawing the Hungarian card. *"If Most-Híd and the SMK tell us that they are uniting in these elections to elect a Hungarian chairman in Trnava, a Slovak city, I say: let us unite, Slovaks in Slovak political parties and elect Tibor Mikuš Chairman of the Trnava self-governing region."* If the Hungarian parties are able to unite, then, according to Fico, the Slovaks can unite as well.<sup>536</sup>

The Chairman of Most-Híd, B. Bugár, responded to his statement, saying that the socialists and the Chairman of Smer-SD, R. Fico, divided the voters into Slovaks and Hungarians and brought nationalism to the municipal election. According to the Chairman of the SMK, J. Berényi, the course of the election campaign was civilized, cultivated and constructive, and he considered Fico's statement to be a point-

532 *Teraz*, 28. 12. 2013, Vytvorit' alternatívu voči Smeru sa nám nepodarilo, priznáva B. Bugár. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/bela-bugar-rozhovor/68998-clanok.html>

533 *Pravda*, 4. 11. 2013, V Trnavskom kraji kope každý sám za seba.

534 *Aktuálne*, 20. 11. 2013, Fico vnáša do regionálnych volieb nacionalizmus, tvrdí Bugár. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/fico-vnasa-do-regionalnych-volieb-nacionalizmus-tvrdi-bugar/slovensko/politika/>

535 *Sme*, 15. 11. 2013, Morvay, P. Ako rodni bratia?

536 *Aktuálne*, 20. 11. 2013, Fico vnáša do regionálnych volieb nacionalizmus, tvrdí Bugár. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/fico-vnasa-do-regionalnych-volieb-nacionalizmus-tvrdi-bugar/slovensko/politika/>

less provocation of conflict.<sup>537</sup> The candidate for the chairman, T. Mikuš, responded that before the second round of elections of the Chairman of the Trnava VÚC the Hungarian card was not drawn by R. Fico, it had been on the table for a long time, which, according to him, was evidenced by the results of the first round of elections in Dunajská Streda and Galanta districts.<sup>538</sup> Political conjuncturalism with the ethnic background was deeply rooted in both groups. Bugár also justified Berényi's support in the second round only on ethnic factors and considered it natural. R. Fico went into battle under Slovak flags, which was typical of him, whenever he considered it politically advantageous in the course of each of his governments.

Political scientist R. Štefančík assessed that in Trnava, before the second round of county election, R. Fico showed his old face and his real relationship to the population from Hungarian minority, who, due to their nationality, can only act in the position of voters, as it was in Košice, but not as holders of public office, as they were trying to do in Trnava. According to Štefančík, the Prime Minister, with his ideas and actions, created an extremely dangerous idea that some population groups in Slovakia can be considered as citizens of the second class. According to Štefančík, populism as a working method of the political elite had already been perfectly tested in the conditions of Slovakia, as well as the search for non-existent enemies, or the problem of some politicians to respect the rights of certain social groups.<sup>539</sup>

Finally, it should be added that the SMK cooperated with T. Mikuš in Trnava for many years and after Mikuš's victory they returned to their cooperation and the chairman of the SMK Berényi became the vice-chairman of the self-governing region. He replaced his party colleague J. Kvarda, who held this position in the previous election period.<sup>540</sup>

Before the elections in Nitra, for the first time in history, the SMK supported the Slovak candidate for regional chairman Tomáš Galbavý, who also was supported by the SDKÚ, Most-Híd, the SaS, Nová väčšina – Dohoda, the OKS<sup>541</sup> Thus for the first time, there was a situation in the second round of elections in which the Hungarian candidate did not stand on one side with a large Slovak coalition on the other.<sup>542</sup>

In the Košice self-governing region, Z. Trebuľa also ran with the support of both Most-Híd and the SMK. The regional chairman of Smer in Košice P. Žiga and the chairman of the regional council of the SMK I. Zachariáš did not want to comment

537 *Aktuálne*, 20. 11. 2013, Fico vnáša do regionálnych volieb nacionalizmus, tvrdí Bugár. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/fico-vnasa-do-regionalnych-volieb-nacionalizmus-tvrdi-bugar/slovensko/politika/>

538 *Pravda*, 21. 11. 2013, Mikuš: Maďarská karta bola dávno na stole.

539 *Sme*, 25. 11. 2013, Štefančík, R. Fico by mal priznať zodpovednosť.

540 *Webnoviny*, 5. 2. 2014, Trnavskí poslanci odklepli odmeny, dostanú minimálne 480 eur. <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/786826-trnavski-poslanci-odklepli-odmeny-dostanu-minimalne-480-eur/>

541 *Pravda*, 30. 10. 2013, Tradičná koalícia je minulosťou.

542 *Aktuálne*, 26. 11. 2013, Čudujete sa výsledkom volieb? Toto je osem dôvodov, prečo tak dopadli. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/cudujete-sa-z-vysledkov-volieb-toto-je-osem-dovodov-preco-je-tak/slovensko/politika/>

on the national disputes and confrontations that occurred in the Trnava self-governing region between the representatives of the SMK and R. Fico, and reminded that these parties had long cooperated in Košice at the local government level and the cooperation is good.<sup>543</sup>

### Elections to the VÚC 2017

There were several changes before the 2017 election. While 408 councillors were elected in the 2013 election, their number increased to 416 in 2017. Another significant change was that the two-round election of the Chairman of the VÚC changed into a one-round election. Many Slovak political parties supported the two-round election of the chairmen of the VÚC during the formation of the regional system because the two-round election prevented Hungarian politicians from succeeding in the Trnava and Nitra regions, where the candidates of the united SMK led by B. Bugár were fairly strong at that time. Before the method of election was changed, the chairman of Most-Híd B. Bugár stated that they had no problem with such a law. Even the non-parliamentary SMK had no objections to the one-round election.<sup>544</sup> Sociologist M. Slosiarik said that a one-round system could be more advantageous for one strong party that has balanced support throughout the country, such as Smer. In his opinion, however, other parties may be more motivated to form possible coalitions and look for a common candidate for a chairman.<sup>545</sup> Sociologist P. Haulík said that he considered the objections to one-round election to be artificial and that the scope of powers that central politics had entrusted to the counties was too weak to have two-round election of chairmen. *“In the current situation where counties are not something that would excite voters and draw them to elections, the connection with municipal elections can increase the turnout and representativeness of the results.”*<sup>546</sup>

The second change that took place before the elections was the extension of the election period for the chairmen and councillors of VÚC by one year, in order to combine elections to VÚC with elections to self-governing bodies of municipalities, and thus increase turnout. Political scientist M. Horský considered such a connection a good step, which would increase the legitimacy of the elected candidates because more people would vote for them. Sociologist M. Slosiarik also agreed that such a combination of elections would attract more voters to the election. However, according to him, the problem may be that two types of campaigns would overlap.<sup>547</sup>

The elections took place on 4 November 2017 and were attended by 29.95 % of eligible voters. The SMK won 30 councillors<sup>548</sup> and Most-Híd won eight councillors.

543 *Sme*, 19. 11. 2013, Fico vyzval Trnavčanov...

544 *Denník N*, 13. 10. 2016, Smer chce voliť župana len raz.

545 *Pravda*, 18. 10. 2016, Nezájem o župy má vytrhnúť z biedy spojenie volieb.

546 *Pravda*, 19. 11. 2016, Bugár: V koalícii je zhoda voliť županov jednokolovo.

547 *Pravda*, 18. 10. 2016, Nezájem o župy má vytrhnúť z biedy spojenie volieb.

548 There were 13 seats in the Trnava self-governing region, 11 seats in the Nitra self-governing region, five seats in the Banská Bystrica self-governing region, and one seat in the Košice self-governing region.

However, they also won others in coalitions. Taking into account the coalitions, the SMK claimed 33 councillors and Most-Híd claimed 10 councillors. After the election, the chairman of Most-Híd B. Bugár assessed that Most-Híd would have one more councillor in the local councils than they had. According to him, the party lost two seats in the Trnava region, on the other hand, they gained four seats in Košice, but given that the party was created only seven years ago and it was difficult for them to find people in the regions who could break through, this was not a bad result and Most-Híd must reinforce their work in the regions.<sup>549</sup> In the 2013 election, however, Most-Híd was much more successful in coalitions, so it had a total of 17 councillors, whereas in 2017 it was only ten. Both parties also competed for the positions of chairmen of the VÚC. In the Bratislava self-governing region, the candidate of Most-Híd D. Krajcer finished in sixth place, in the Nitra self-governing region, the SMK candidate I. Farkas finished in fifth place and the MKDA candidate L. Hajda in seventh place. In the Trnava self-governing region, in 2013, Most-Híd candidate for the chairman of the VÚC J. Nagy gained 18.2 % and the SMK candidate J. Berényi won 18.33 %, but in 2017 Berényi won 17.1 % and the candidate of Most K. Rigó only 5.6 %. In the Košice region, however, the candidate of Most-Híd K. Pataky finished in third place with 9.4 %. G. Gál explained this by the low turnout, which does not help the party and automatically reflects on the result. The second reason, according to Gál, was the loss of votes due to the entry of Most-Híd into a coalition with the SNS and Smer. The third reason according to Gál was that the party deliberately nominates lesser-known candidates into regional elections so that people could get to know them. Another reason, Gál said, may be that Most-Híd, unlike the SMK in some regions, is unable to mobilize their voters, which the party is aware of. While Hungarians were among the most disciplined voters in the 1990s, the turnout declined slightly, even in the parliamentary or presidential elections. Most-Híd explained this by saying that neither the SNS nor Mečiar were any longer a threat to this national minority.<sup>550</sup>

With regard to the regional elections in Slovakia, State Secretary of the Office of the Hungarian Government for National Policy, Á. Potápi, said, “*In the election battle of the Hungarian SMK-MKP party and the mixed Most-Híd for the votes of the Hungarian minority, the SMK-MKP won. In four of the five regions in which the Hungarian minority lives, Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra and Banská Bystrica – the SMK-MKP achieved better results than Most-Híd. Most-Híd won more seats only in the Košice self-governing region.*” The chairman of the SMK J. Menyhárt described the results of the local elections as a success.<sup>551</sup> Gy. Bárdos a member of the party’s leadership,

549 *Aktuálne*, 7. 11. 2017, Bugár sa vyjadril k voľbám: Fico nebol nadšený, nehovoril však o obrovskej rane. <https://aktualne.atlas.sk/slovensko/politika/bugar-vyjadril-k-volbam-fico-nebol-nadseny-nehovoril-vsak-obrovskej-rane.html>

550 *Denník N*, 7. 11. 2017, Porazeným volieb je aj Bugárov Most-Híd.

551 *Teraz*, 6. 11. 2017, Maďari k voľbám do VÚC: SMK má dobrú pozíciu do komunálnych volieb. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/madarska-vlada-k-volbam-do-vuc-smk-ma-do/290790-clanok.html>

expressed a similar opinion. “As a non-parliamentary party, we are in third place in the ranking of parties. I think this is very clear proof that the SMK was successful in this regional election.”<sup>552</sup>

## Municipal Elections

### *Municipal Elections 2006*

Municipal elections were held in the same year as the parliamentary election, and political parties paid incomparably more attention to the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic and postponed the activities related to municipal elections to the last months before the election.<sup>553</sup>

The municipal elections were held on 2 December 2006 and 215 mayors were elected for the SMK in 477 municipalities or cities in Slovakia. There were 1952 councillors elected to the municipal councils for the SMK.<sup>554</sup>

The turnout at the elections was 47.7 %. Traditionally, it was high in the districts of southern Slovakia. At that time, the SMK had a strong and traditional electoral base, disciplined voters, and was a traditional supporter of decentralization and the strengthening of local and regional governments. It was the gradual strengthening of self-government and interest in municipal politics that maintained the voter turnout in districts with a strong representation of the Hungarian minority above average.<sup>555</sup>

Despite a slight decrease in votes, compared to the previous municipal election, the representatives of the SMK assessed the results of the municipal elections as good immediately after the election. According to B. Bugár, the party’s mobilization campaign was effective and the SMK candidates won e.g. in Dunajská Streda, Šamorín, Kolárovo or Fiľakovo. In his opinion, the results of the municipal elections showed that there is a greater interest of the population in real personalities, regardless of whether they are independent or candidates of the SMK.<sup>556</sup>

### *Municipal Elections 2010*

Prior to the municipal elections in 2010, Most-Híd did not rule out possible cooperation with the SMK. However, negotiations between the parties were unsuccessful and both parties eventually nominated their own candidates in the election, although they did support a common candidate in exceptional cases.<sup>557</sup>

552 *Denník N*, 7. 11. 2017, Porazeným volieb je aj Bugárov Most-Híd.

553 MESEŽNIKOV, G. Politické strany vo voľbách do orgánov samospráv obcí a miest. In MESEŽNIKOV, G. (ed.). *Komunálne voľby 2002*. Bratislava: IVO, 2003, p. 52.

554 ŠUTAJOVÁ, J. Komunálne voľby 2006 a SMK. In ŠUTAJOVÁ, J. – ĐURKOVSKÁ, M. (ed.). *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku v procesoch transformácie po roku 1989. (Historické, politologické a právne súvislosti)*. Prešov: Universum 2007, p. 76-83.

555 Štatistický úrad SR <https://volby.statistics.sk/oso/oso2006/slov/obvod/results/kart.jsp.htm>

556 *Sme*, 3. 12. 2006, Bugár: Kampaň SMK bola účinná a výsledky kandidátov sú dobré. <https://domov.sme.sk/c/3032946/bugar-kampan-smk-bola-ucinna-a-vysledky-kandidatov-su-dobre.html>

557 *Sme*, 3. 9. 2010, Maďarské strany pred voľbami rokujú o spolupráci.

The elections took place on 27 November 2010 and the turnout was 49.69 % of the total number of eligible voters. Most of the elected councillors to municipal, city and local councils were independent candidates. The SMK won 1194 (5.68 %) seats in municipal councils. Most-Híd won 908 (4.31 %) councillors.<sup>558</sup>

Independent candidates also won the most positions of mayors. The SMK won 129 mayors, Most-Híd 95 mayors and the joint coalition of the SMK and Most-Híd won 19 positions of mayors.<sup>559</sup> The elections did not bring good results for the SMK, which could be expected, given the division of the votes of the voters of Hungarian nationality between the two parties and the fact that the SMK was no longer a parliamentary party. In terms of staff, Most-Híd could build on a large part of the SMK membership base, which transferred into Most's structures, and the party was more successful in municipal elections than other new political parties.<sup>560</sup>

### **Municipal Elections 2014**

Most-Híd did not rule out cooperation with the SMK even before the municipal elections in 2014. Most-Híd spokesman, G. Gilányi, said that everything would depend on mutual agreement. He also confirmed that there were ongoing negotiations in some regions, but did not want to be more specific. The SMK commented on possible cooperation with Most-Híd in the sense that, according to the party's statutes, local organizations have the exclusive right to nominate candidates.<sup>561</sup> However, as per the leader of Most-Híd B. Bugár, the chairman of the SMK J. Berényi said in the daily *Új Szó* that he could imagine cooperation with Most-Híd only from 2015. Bugár also added that it is the responsibility of the SMK and Most was trying to negotiate coalitions that could be successful everywhere it was possible.<sup>562</sup>

The nomination of a joint candidate of the SMK and Most-Híd in Komárno was among the most presented cooperation. Based on the agreement, the chairman of the local organization of the SMK, A. Czírnia, ran for the position of Mayor of the city. According to the agreement, there were to be two Deputies of the Mayor from Most-Híd and the Head of the City Council was to be nominated by the SMK. The parties also redistributed the seats in the city council in advance, 13 seats to be taken by Most-Híd seats and 12 seats for the SMK. Former Mayor T. Bastrnák (Most-Híd) declared that *"The coalition was not formed out of love, but was born on the basis of goodwill.*

558 *Teraz*, 30. 10. 2014, V ére samostatného Slovenska sa doteraz konalo päť komunálnych voľieb. <http://www.teraz.sk/import/komunalne-volby-chronologia/103884-clanok.html>; *Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky*. <https://volby.statistics.sk/oso/oso2010/menu/indexv.jsp@lang=sk.htm>.

559 Štatistický úrad SR. <https://volby.statistics.sk/oso/oso2010/sr/tab3.jsp@lang=sk.htm>.

560 KLIMOVSKÝ, D. – ŽUBOROVÁ, V. Komunálne voľby 2010. In KOLLAR, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G. – BÚTORA, M. (eds.). *Slovensko 2010. Správa o stave spoločnosti a demokracie a o trendoch na rok 2011*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2010, p. 142.

561 *Teraz*, 14. 8. 2014, Most nevylučuje spoluprácu s SMK v komunálnych voľbách. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/most-smk-most-hid-komunalne-volby/94550-clanok.html>

562 *Teraz*, 19. 8. 2014, Bugár: Predseda SMK v maďarskom denníku vylúčil spoluprácu s Mostom. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/bugar-smk-most-hid-relacia/95036-clanok.html>



*We have concluded a coalition agreement that will apply not only in the pre-election period but also in the next election period.*<sup>563</sup>

In September, the SMK announced that they would have their candidates for councillors or mayors in 445 municipalities. According to Berényi, mostly the SMK candidates were not to run in the elections in the coalition, but separately.<sup>564</sup> As per Berényi, the SMK had the ambition to defend the results of previous municipal elections.<sup>565</sup> By October 20, the SMK had already agreed to 65 coalitions for the election of mayors, of which it was a coalition with Most-Híd in 33 cases. In 212 cases, the SMK ran for the position of mayors individually. The parties did not agree on a common approach in several major cities in southern Slovakia. The Chairman of the SMK Republican Council, L. Szigeti, described the cooperation between the SMK and Most-Híd in the municipal elections as rather modest. However, he also said that according to him, it was necessary to start somewhere.<sup>566</sup>

Most-Híd nominated a total of 2,224 candidates for councillors and 407 candidates, including in coalitions, for the positions of mayors. The leader of Most-Híd B. Bugár also said that it was difficult to quantify the success of the party, but he assumed that they could talk of the success of Most-Híd if more than half of their candidates are successful.<sup>567</sup>

The elections took place on 15 November 2014. The turnout was 48.34 %. Once again, independent candidates for mayors were the most successful the municipal elections. The SMK won 107 seats (3.67 %) of mayors, Most-Híd won 87 (2.99 %) and the MKDA won 1 post (0.03 %). Independent councillors also won the most seats in local and municipal councils. The SMK gained 1151 (5.54 %) councillors, Most-Híd 829 (3.99 %) councillors and MKDA 17 (0.08 %) councillors.<sup>568</sup>

Most-Híd assessed the results of the municipal elections positively. According to party chairman, B. Bugár, Most did not lose to the SMK in the south of Slovakia. Most-Híd also supported several independent candidates who were successful. *“In Kráľovský Chlmec, our candidate defeated the SMK candidate. However, the SMK is not important to us. We are building Most-Híd. We defended our positions. Most-Híd is settling down in southern Slovakia.”* The coalition of Most-Híd and the SMK in Komárno was unsuccessful, Most also failed in Dunajská Streda, as well as in Šamorín, the hometown of the chairman of Most-Híd. Overall, however, Bugár stated: *“We had a lower number of candidates than four years ago. We have support-*

563 Teraz, 5. 9. 2014, V Komárne budú mať SMK a Most-Híd spoločného kandidáta. <http://www.teraz.sk/komunalne-volby/komunalne-volby-kandidati-komarno/97002-clanok.html>

564 Teraz, 27. 9. 2014, SMK bude mať svojich kandidátov na poslancov a starostov v 445 obciach. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/smk-komunalne-volby-kandidat/99771-clanok.html>

565 Teraz, 11. 10. 2014, József Berényi: Autonómie sa netreba báť. <http://www.teraz.sk/eurovolby-2014/smk-berenyi-autonomia-komunalne/101506-clanok.html>

566 Pravda, 20. 10. 2014, K veľkému spájaniu SMK a Mostu nedošlo.

567 Pravda, 15. 11. 2014, Dnes sa uzavrie boj o radnice.

568 Aktuálne, 16. 11. 2014, Ústredná volebná komisia: nové voľby sa vyhlásia v 29 obciach. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/ustredna-volebna-komisia-nove-volby-sa-vyhlasia-v-29-obciach/slovensko/politika/>

*ed several independent candidates. However, we maintained our positions.*” According to Bugár, 173 mayors were successful with the support of Most-Híd, and another 46 successful independent candidates who won also had the support of the party.<sup>569</sup> According to the vice-chairwomen of Most-Híd L. Žitňanská, the party achieved a worse result in the northern districts of Slovakia and wanted to work on greater trustworthiness of the party members in the regions and also wanted to focus on the Ruthenian areas.<sup>570</sup>

After the elections, the SMK assessed that the party had won the positions of five city mayors and 102 local mayors in southern Slovakia. According to the SMK, the results of the municipal elections definitively concluded the period of questioning their existence as an independent Hungarian political party. *“It has repeatedly been shown that we have a very strong base in southern Slovakia and the fact that we are the third strongest party already means something. We need to be counted on in the future as well,”* said the SMK Chairman J. Berényi. Analyst J. Baránek also assessed that the SMK achieved a better result in the municipal elections than Most-Híd. *“They were more successful, but it must be taken into account that SMK ran only in southern Slovakia.”*<sup>571</sup> The SMK chairman J. Berényi also informed that *“Local chairman of SMK in Komárno Attila Czírja, who ran for mayor in the coalition with Most-Híd, informed the leadership of the post-election situation. He announced that he was resigning after his failure.”* The newly elected mayor of Komárno was an independent candidate L. Stubendek, who suspended his membership in the SMK before the municipal elections.<sup>572</sup> The pre-election coalition of Most and the SMK, which was formed in Komárno and which was even personally supported by Prime Minister V. Orbán in the campaign, was not successful because voters on both sides did not believe such cooperation after the years of mutual mudslinging and elected a mayor who left the SMK as a sign of protest against the politicking.<sup>573</sup> The party’s vice-chairman, L. Solymos, admitted that the joint support of the mayor of Komárno with the

569 *Aktuálne*, 16. 11. 2014, Ďalší komunálni víťazi. Most-Híd na juhu s SMK neprehral, tvrdí Bugár. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/dalsi-komunalni-vitazi-most-hid-na-juhu-s-smk-neprehral-tvrdi-bugar/slovensko/politika/>

570 *Aktuálne*, 29. 11. 2014, Most-Híd vyhodnotil komunálne voľby..., <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/most-hid-vyhodnotil-komunalne-volby-strana-bude-stabilnejsia-a-silnejsia-avizuje-bugar/slovensko/politika/>

571 *Pravda*, 18. 11. 2014, SMK predbehla niektoré parlamentné strany.

572 In Dunajská Streda Mayor Z. Hájos (SMK) repeatedly gained trust, for the third time and the SMK won 16 councillors (previously 12) in the 25-member council while Most-Híd gained only four councillors (previously 11). *Teraz*, 20. 11. 2014, Prvé zasadnutie mestskej samosprávy Dunajskej Stredy bude už o pár dní. <http://www.teraz.sk/bratislava/prve-zasadnutie-dunajska-streda-primator/107153-clanok.html>; *Teraz*, 18. 11. 2014, V Komárne neuspel spoločný kandidát SMK a Most-Híd, vyhral nezávislý. <http://www.teraz.sk/bratislava/v-komarne-neuspel-spolocny-kandidat/106776-clanok.html>

573 *Sme*, 21. 11. 2014, Morvay P. Keď v jednote nie je sila.

SMK had an effect of mistrust on the voters. *“For years, the SMK has been conducting a hate campaign against Most, people did not trust this coalition.”*<sup>574</sup>

The results of the municipal elections had other personnel consequences in both parties. A. Érsek, MP of the NC SR, became the new district chairman of Most-Híd in Dunajská Streda. He replaced the MP G. Csicsai who resigned due to the party’s poor results in municipal elections. In Dunajská Streda, J. Nagy, an MEP, who was a councillor of the city council also resigned and F. Vangel took his place as councillor. Most-Híd also admitted that the defeat in Dunajská Streda was unnecessary.<sup>575</sup>

A serious situation arose after the municipal elections in Komárno, where a new basic organization of the SMK was created after the party leadership dissolved its original basic organization. The chairman of the SMK J. Berényi stated that the situation was serious. *“What happened in Komárno was a real debacle,”* he said, noting that the joint candidate of the SMK and Most-Híd lost and, compared to the previous election period, the number of councillors for the SMK decreased as well. According to Berényi, the party leadership thus came to the conclusion that the local base needed to be reorganized. *“First we abolished the old one and at the same time we are taking steps to create a new organization ... it will be a new era of the SMK in Komárno.”*<sup>576</sup> Later, in one of the interviews, B. Bugár noted that the SMK abolished their basic organization in Komárno only because it cooperated with the “traitors”, i.e. with Most.<sup>577</sup>

### ***Municipal Elections 2018***

The SMK started preparations for the 2018 municipal elections in the first quarter of the year.<sup>578</sup> However, the presentation of the candidates for city mayors, local mayors and local councillors, as well as the official opening of the municipal election campaign were to be combined with the congress and the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the SMK at the end of September. P. Csáky stated that he did not expect much cooperation between Most-Híd and the SMK in the municipal elections, but admitted that such cooperation could occur at the local level in specific cases. He only ruled out the cooperation with the fascists and communists. According to Csáky, the motto of the SMK in the municipal elections was to be the transparency and efficien-

574 *Aktuálne*, 29. 11. 2014, Most-Híd vyhodnotil komunálne voľby: Strana bude stabilnejšia a silnejšia, avizuje Bugár. <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/most-hid-vyhodnotil-komunalne-volby-strana-bude-stabilnejšia-a-silnejšia-avizuje-bugar/slovensko/politika/>; *Webnoviny*, 23. 11. 2014, Len hyeny môžu organizovať protesty pred domom, tvrdí Fico. <http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/892991-len-hyeny-mozu-organizovat-protesty-pred-domom-tvrdi-fico/>

575 *Aktuálne*, 29. 11. 2014, Most-Híd vyhodnotil komunálne voľby...

576 *Teraz*, 29. 1. 2015, V Komárne zrušili starú a zriaďujú novú základnú organizáciu SMK. <http://www.teraz.sk/bratislava/komarno-smk-zakladna-organizacia-zrusen/117426-clanok.html>

577 *Aktuality*, 27. 1. 2016, Bugár: Kto nevie robiť kompromisy, nemá by robiť politiku. <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/312522/bugar-dnes-uz-viem-preco-prochazka-odmietal-spolupracu-pravice/>

578 *Teraz*, 24. 2. 2018, SMK sa pripravuje na komunálne voľby. slovenskú vládu kritizuje. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/smk-komunalne-volby/310485-clanok.html>

cy of local politics.<sup>579</sup> In September, the SMK announced that they would nominate 297 candidates for city and local mayors in the municipal elections. Of these, 196 were SMK's own candidates, 64 candidates were nominated in coalitions and 37 candidates were independent, but they ran with the support of the SMK.<sup>580</sup>

Most-Híd also started preparing for the municipal elections in the first half of the year. They were to inform about particular candidates and possible coalition agreements only after the end of negotiations. However, Vice-Chairman of the Party Á. Ravasz said that he did not rule out that the candidates of Most-Híd could go to local coalitions also with parties from the parliamentary opposition or with the SMK. Still, he ruled out coalitions with extremists.<sup>581</sup>

Most-Híd declared that they were going to the municipal elections with the aim to increase the number of city and local mayors elected with the support of the party. Most-Híd left the formation of coalitions to the regions. He confirmed that Most-Híd will not cooperate with ĽSNS in the municipal elections. He also commented on why Most-Híd did not agree to cooperate with the SMK even in these elections. According to Bugár, it was due to personal animosities at the local level.<sup>582</sup>

Independent candidates for city and local mayors were the most successful in the elections held on 10 November 2018. They succeeded in 1232 municipalities and cities (42.42 %). Most-Híd occupied 127 positions of city and local mayors (4.37 %) and the SMK won only 115 city and local mayors (3.96 %). The MKDA won 3 mayors (0.10 %). Also in the competition for seats, the most successful were independent candidates, who won 7,301 seats (35.36 %). The SMK won 1,248 councillor seats (6.04 %), Most-Híd won 915 seats (4.43 %) and the MKDA 19 seats (0.09 %). The turnout in the municipal elections for the whole of Slovakia was 48.67 %.<sup>583</sup> Almost all political parties called their results a success after the elections.

After the elections, Most-Híd chairman B. Bugár said that the party managed to get 30 % more seats for mayors and councillors. According to him, the party's ambition before the elections was to achieve at least a 10 % increase. *“As Most-Híd, we have 127 mayors. I'm very glad. We gained seats even in places where the SMK fought very strongly. The trend is slowly growing, I am pleased.”*<sup>584</sup> However, the increase in the number of mayors for Most was also related to the fact that successful city and

579 *Aktuality*, 31. 7. 2018, Pál Csáky sa rozhodol nekandidovať v prezidentských voľbách. <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/611304/pal-csaky-sa-rozhodol-nekandidovat-v-prezidentskych-voľbach/>

580 *Teraz*, 11. 9. 2018, SMK postaví do komunálnych volieb takmer 300 kandidátov. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/politika-smk-postavi-do-komunalnych-voli/348009-clanok.html>

581 *Denník N*, 11. 5. 2018, Komunálne voľby, veľká neznáma.

582 *Aktuality*, 15. 8. 2018, Bugár: Bol by som iný prezident ako Kiska, vedel by som byť nad vecou. <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/615251/bugar-bol-by-som-iny-prezident-ako-kiska-vedel-by-som-byt-nad-vecou/>

583 *Teraz*, 11. 11. 2018, Nezávislí získali 1232 z takmer 3000 samospráv, účasť bola 48,67 %. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/nezavisli-maju-1232-z-takmer-3000-sam/360428-clanok.html>

584 *Aktuality*, 16. 11. 2018, Most-Híd zhodnotí komunálne voľby a príde s balíčkom pre rodiny. <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/642360/most-hid-zhodnoti-komunalne-voľby-a-pride-s-balíčkom-pre-rodiny/>

local mayors, who ran as independent or with other political parties in 2014, joined Most in the recent years before the municipal elections.<sup>585</sup> According to political scientist Juraj Marušiak, the success of Most-Híd was due to the fact that the party had greater coalition potential than the SMK and thus had a chance to succeed in regions that are not inhabited by members of the Hungarian minority. The SMK was again more successful in regions with a high representation of the Hungarian minority.<sup>586</sup>

According to SMK chairman J. Menyhárt, the municipal elections were quite successful for the party. He stated that while in 2014 the SMK filled 107 positions of city and local mayors, in 2018 there were 115. Menyhárt stated that the number of councillors of local councils also increased. The SMK won 1,248 councillor seats and *“another 110 councillors won a seat in the coalitions.”* In 2014, according to him, they won only 1,151 councillors. The SMK was the strongest especially in the western part of southern Slovakia, which according to the Vice-chairwoman of the SMK for Self-government and Public Administration I. Kőrösi was related to the fact that the party had one of the broadest bases in the south of the country.<sup>587</sup>

The State Secretary of the Office of the Hungarian Government responsible for National Policy Á. Potápi also responded to the results of the municipal elections in Slovakia. At the event of the Research Institute of National Policy, he said that the ability to promote the interests of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia strengthened in Saturday's municipal elections and that there was a strong Hungarian representation even in cities and municipalities in Slovakia where the SMK did not win. In his opinion, the trend in the municipal elections, already visible in the elections to the bodies of self-governing regions, was that the SMK was traditionally stronger in the western part of southern Slovakia and occupied more positions. According to the Chairman of SMK J. Menyhárt, there are 28 municipalities and towns in Slovakia with more than 3,000 inhabitants, in which members of the Hungarian minority live. Eight of them were led by the SMK after the elections, four were under the control of the Slovak-Hungarian mixed party Most-Híd and in 16 municipalities and cities, they had independent mayors and mayors. The Director of the Research Institute of National Policy Z. Kántor added to their statements, and said of the SMK election result that the proportion of independent councillors in Slovakia was increasing from year to year, and the SMK maintained their stability under the given circumstances.<sup>588</sup>

The SMK improved in Dunajská Streda, where Most did not get a single seat in the city council after the elections. However, the SMK achieved poor results in Komárno or Galanta. They lost the position of mayor in Hurbanovo and did not get the post of a single councillor.<sup>589</sup>

585 *Denník N*, 13. 11. 2018, Morvay, P. Pre SMK a Most sú výsledky skôr varovaním.

586 *Pravda*, 12. 11. 2018, Most-Híd sa zahryzol do bášť SMK.

587 *Teraz*, 13. 11. 2018, SMK je s výsledkami v komunálnych voľbách spokojná. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/smk-je-z-vysledkami-v-komunalnych-vol/360877-clanok.html>

588 *Teraz*, 12. 11. 2018, Presadzovanie záujmov Maďarov žijúcich v SR vo voľbách zosilnelo. <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/presadzovanie-zaujmov-madarov-zijuci/360667-clanok.html>

589 *Denník N*, 13. 11. 2018, Morvay, P. Pre SMK a Most sú výsledky skôr varovaním.

On the other hand, the SMK maintained control over Šamorín, where they won the position of mayor and, with the exception of one independent councillor, also filled all positions in the city council.<sup>590</sup>

As in the whole of Slovakia, the proportion of successful independent candidates increased in the south of Slovakia. Former politicians of Most and the SMK often acted as independent candidates. Komárno was an example of a town where success in these municipal elections was attributed mainly to independent candidates, whether for the post of the mayor or for the post of councillors. The reason for that was the discreditation of the local organization of the SMK and the local organization of Most in the town by nominating a joint candidate for mayor and a common list of candidates for councillors in the previous municipal elections.<sup>591</sup>

While the SMK was clearly more successful in the previous municipal elections, in 2018 Most won over the SMK in the number of city and local mayors. The dominance of the SMK in the municipal elections was lost. Both parties were more successful in smaller municipalities with a low number of voters and lost in the cities. The decrease compared to the previous years was also noticeable in the turnout in the south of Slovakia.<sup>592</sup>

The right to vote or to be elected is an indisputable right of Slovak citizens, including the citizens of Hungarian nationality, and enables the citizens of the Slovak Republic to participate in the administration of public affairs at various levels of government. After 1989, Hungarian political parties in Slovakia were also aware of the importance of participating in elections, competing for the votes of voters regularly and in all types of elections, either by nominating their own candidates or by supporting candidates from other political parties or independent candidates.

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590 *Denník N*, 12. 11. 2018, Morvay, P. Staré istoty sa na juhu Slovenska končia.

591 *Denník N*, 12. 11. 2018, Morvay, P. Staré istoty sa na juhu Slovenska končia.

592 *Denník N*, 13. 11. 2018, Morvay, P. Pre SMK a Most sú výsledky skôr varovaním; *Denník N*, 12. 11. 2018, Morvay, P. Staré istoty sa na juhu Slovenska končia.

# Historical Topics in Slovak and Hungarian Politics and Slovak-Hungarian Relations

Historical topics in Slovak-Hungarian relations are a serious problem not in historiography itself. Slovak and Hungarian historians (certainly not all) have proved that they are able to discuss various serious topics from our history at a high professional level.<sup>593</sup> The situation is worse in the political interpretation of history, which is marked by absent empathy, often aggression, incorrectness and prioritization of national interest. Moreover, as K. Petőcz, a critic of nonsensical nationalism, wrote in one of his articles, “*The inability to look at common history, but also common future soberly, objectively and empathetically, is inherent in parts of the democratic political spectrum, whether in Slovakia or Hungary. And that’s the real problem...*”<sup>594</sup>

A. Simon and M. Michela consider how the Hungarian and Slovak collective historical memory tries to expropriate certain fragments of common history and interprets them differently to be the fundamental problem. The Hungarian public views the history of Historic Hungary as exclusively Hungarian national history, and they see everything born during the Kingdom of Hungary as the product of the Hungarian nation, as if Germans, Slovaks, Romanians, etc. did not live in Historic Hungary. They also see Slovakia as the lost Felvidék, where everything that is valuable comes from the Hungarians. According to Simon, Slovak awareness, in turn, looks at today’s Slovakia as a monopoly of Slovaks. For him, as a Hungarian and historian, it is strange that Slovak historical awareness (which is the fault of historical science) reflects today’s state borders into the past, thus creating the impression that Slovakia and its current borders were a historical reality in the Middle Ages. He sees the problem in the fact that what can be considered Slovak is selected within these borders, and other events, personalities, politics of the whole Kingdom of Hungary remain outside.<sup>595</sup> “*In international relations, these internal conflicts are instrumentalized in favour of their own selfish and nationalist goals, which politicians often “heat up” with trivial historical myths and half-truths.*”<sup>596</sup>

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593 ŠUTAJ, Š. Szlovák–magyar történelmi párhuzamok és konfliktusok (a nemzeti történelmek közép-európai kontextusban) avagy a közös szlovák–magyar szövegek írásáról. In *Kor/ridor*, 2014, 1, No. 1, p. 9-20.

594 *Sme*, 14. 5. 2009. Petőcz, K. Uviazli sme v devätnástom storočí.

595 *Sme*, 29. 9. 2009. Kto sa nám ospravedlní, SNS nechá na Maďarov, <http://www.sme.sk/c/3511228/kto-sa-nam-ospravedlni-sns-necha-na-madarov.html#ixzz0pDmvnccl>

596 Investori odídu a nám zstanú národnostné ťahanice (rozhovor J. Marušiaka s L. Szarkom), [http://www.despiteborders.com/clanok.php?subaction=showfull&id=1240880506&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=3,4,10&](http://www.despiteborders.com/clanok.php?subaction=showfull&id=1240880506&archive=&start_from=&ucat=3,4,10&)

The problem of Slovak-Hungarian relations after 1989 was present:

1. at a general level, such as: a/ the problem of guaranteeing and the inviolability of the borders established by the peace treaties after the Second World War; b/ the problem of securing the rights of the Hungarian minority, which would guarantee the overall development of this community and unrestricted contact with the mother nation in accordance with international conventions; c/ acceptance of international legal standards and, after the accession to the EU, European legislation.
2. at a specific level, these problems manifest themselves as: a/ the feeling of mutual injustice as a result of the turbulent past full of contradictions, such as Hungarianization at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Trianon, decrees of President Beneš and some of their consequences in the measures of SNR (Slovak National Council) after the Second World War, the abolition of which is also part of the pre-election program of Hungarian parties in Slovakia in the elections in 1994, issues of Vienna Arbitration, reslovakization measures after World War II., etc.; b/ The problem of current borders, or “fair borders”, which is not just a purely theoretical question, considering that it was still possible to open any question during breakthrough or “revolutionary” periods.

We do not write this in order to cause fear of some threat, the historical experience shows that problems that could not even be mentioned (in the whole historical development), let alone established, were after a significant change in geopolitical conditions imposed without any scruples, resolutely and uncompromisingly (the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy, the break-up of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1939, the displacement of the Germans and the solution of the Hungarian question after the Second World War or the fall of communist regimes in Europe).

When evaluating Slovak-Hungarian relations in Slovakia, it is also necessary to take into account the “historical heritage” that both sides have their “mental” equipment. It is also affected by the fact that the fear of the fate of one’s own ethnic group dominates in the awareness of the ethnicities of the living in Slovakia and the threat to another ethnic group is not considered real. This situation is also characteristic of Slovak-Hungarian relations. It is the hypersensitivity and suspicion that is really present here and it is necessary to take it into account. Politicians on both sides calculate with it, regardless of the real threats.

As a result of the “historical heritage” of Slovak-Hungarian relations, an important component of the creation of national identity in this area was the view of common history through the prism of relations to the wrongs and atrocities that affected individual ethnic communities.

People are divided by the way they perceive the past, how they pass it on to the next generation, but also by what goal they see ahead of them. History enters the service of the present to support ideological, national, state, group, and even individual goals. The historical dimension in Slovak-Hungarian relations is currently manifested the most significantly in discussions on the consequences of the decrees of President E. Beneš and SNR regulations adopted in 1944 – 1948 against the German and Hungarian minorities, the peace treaties of Trianon in 1920 and Paris in 1947,



Vienna arbitration, however, there are many more conflicting issues, as well as the “positive” ones<sup>597</sup>. Unfortunately, even in this case, we must state that we would need a separate publication for this pile of problems, therefore we will pay attention only to the key event of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Trianon and the Trianon Peace Treaty and its political interpretations, use and abuse in 2004 – 2018.

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597 MARUŠIAK, J. Slovensko a Maďarsko – spojenectvo s historickou záťažou. In *Studia Politica Slovaca*, 2015, 8, No. 2, p. 41-54; ŠUTAJOVÁ, J. Problematika neslovanských menšín v ČSR po druhej svetovej vojne v slovenskej politike po roku 1989. In *Sociálne a politické analýzy* 2012, 6, No. 1, p. 17-47; *Národná obroda*, XVI., No. 97, 28. 4. 2005, p. 5; Šutaj, Š. Čo sa dialo so slovenskými Maďarmi po 2. svetovej vojne.

# Trianon – Hungarian National Policy and the Deficits of Slovak Policy – Finding a Relationship to the Past and Modelling the Future

In scientific research, there are two lines of perception of Trianon that we must accept.

- a/ The Treaty of Trianon of 4 June 1920 – i.e. Trianon as a historical event.
- b/ Trianon as a symbol of events that marked the change in the organization of Central Europe after the end of World War I.<sup>598</sup>

We see Trianon primarily as a milestone in the development of Europe, which, together with other peace treaties, created a new system of European arrangement. Despite the disruption in the years of the next war and with all the problems it caused, it guaranteed the arrangement of Central Europe and, together with the peace treaties of 1947, it is also the basis of peaceful coexistence for the current generation. However, both historians and political scientists observe how the event has been preserved in the historical memory of the population, what is its place, how it lives in the consciousness of individual groups in the society, what importance they attach to it, how they commemorate or celebrate it, use or abuse it.<sup>599</sup>

In particular, this second dimension of Trianon is becoming the subject of instrumentalization in politics. This has been the case since the adoption of the Treaty of Trianon to the present day. Politics tries to grasp history, to take a stand in the interests of its own profit, also depending on the specific geopolitical situation and political and ideological objectives. It is in the interest of politics (state, party ...) to have a clear relationship to the past, as this allows it to construct the future in accordance with its program principles. At this point, we could open several historical topics that affected the formation of Slovak-Hungarian relations in domestic and foreign politics, as well as the state's relationship with minorities and vice versa (Vienna Arbitration, Decrees of President E. Beneš, post-war legislation in the Czechoslovak Republic, historical personalities...). Such is the position of Trianon and the Treaty of Trianon in history, as a complicated and diversely perceived milestone in all lines of historical memory (official, family, group ...). In a broader sense, the concept of Trianon, as part

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598 Roman Holec also pays attention to these parts of Trianon's "life" in his work: HOLEC, R. *Trianon. Triumf a katastrofa*. Bratislava: Marenčin PT, 2020.

599 HOLEC, R. Trianonské rituály alebo úvahy nad niektorými javmi v maďarskej historiografii. In *Historický časopis*, 50, 2010, 2, p. 291-311; MICHELA, M. Emlékezet, politika, Trianon. In *Regio*, 2007, 4, p. 81-92. [www.http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00068/pdf/081-092.pdf](http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00068/pdf/081-092.pdf); KUSÁ, D. – MICHELA, M. Dejiny a kultúrna trauma. Trianon a politiky verejného spomínania na Slovensku a v Maďarsku. In MICHELA, M. – VÖRÖS, L. a kol. *Rozpad Uhorska a trianonská mierová zmluva. K politikám pamäti na Slovensku a v Maďarsku*. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2013, p. 277-305. Online: <http://www.forumhistoriae.sk/web/guest/-/rozpad-uhorska-a-trianonska-mierova-zmluva>; KOVÁCS, É. O traumatickej pamäti Trianonu. MICHELA, M. – VÖRÖS, L. a kol. *Rozpad Uhorska a Trianonská mierová zmluva...*, p. 265-275.

of historical memory, is also linked to the disintegration of the Kingdom of Hungary, the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic and the position of national minorities in the successor states, as well as the search of various Hungarian state policy for answers to Trianon fate (trauma) until the present, including the elites and representations of the Hungarian national minority in Slovakia.

The complexity of the perception of Slovak and Hungarian politics results from the different views on the disintegration of the monarchy (this is especially evident, for example, in the issue of citizenship). It is crucial for Slovak politics and most Slovak historians that the victorious powers recognized Czechoslovakia and its establishment as early as October 1918, that this acceptance was supported by the declaration in Prague and Martin. Subsequently, the signing of the truce led to the final disintegration of the monarchy, resulting in the separation of the Kingdom of Hungary, which was left by Austria and the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic and other successor states.<sup>600</sup> The monarchy disintegrated in formal terms, in terms of constitutional and international law. The Hungarian People's Republic led by M. Károlyi was proclaimed, and only after the suppression of the Hungarian Bolshevik Republic on 1 March 1920, a state called the Hungarian Kingdom was created.<sup>601</sup>

Successor states arose on the ruins of the Kingdom of Hungary. The Treaty of Trianon confirmed this fact, clarified and put finishing touches on the existing borders, thus dashing any hopes that the powers would consider keeping the Kingdom of Hungary in its territorial span before the disintegration in 1918.

Hungarian historiography, legal science and current Hungarian politics are based on the thesis of a thousand-year continuity of Hungary (in various institutional forms) without interruption, as the heir and direct successor of the Kingdom Hungary (Historic Hungary).<sup>602</sup> Both national historiographies and politics work with documents

600 The reasons and causes of the disintegration of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Empire are extensively analysed in the literature on both sides of the border, e.g. HRONSKÝ, M. *Boj o Slovensko a Trianon 1918 – 1920*. Bratislava: Národné literárne centrum, 1998; HO-LEC, R. *Trianon. Triumf a katastrofa...*; ABLONCZY, B. *Trianon-legendák*. Budapest: Jaffa, 2010. Plenty of scientific and popular literature was published in Hungary in relation to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Treaty of Trianon for example: ZEIDLER, M. *Trianon – Nemzet és emlékezet* Budapest: Osiris, 2020; SZÁRAZ, M. Gy. *Fájó Trianon*. Budapest: Scholar Kiadó, 2019; PRITZ, P. *100 év – A trianoni Magyarország képes története*. Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2020; ORMOS, M. *Padovától Trianonig – 1918 – 1920*. Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2019; ROMSICS, I. *A Trianoni békeszerződés*. Budapest: Helikon, 2020.

601 BEŇA, J. *Medzinárodno-právne súvislosti Viedenskej arbitráže*. In ŠMIHULA, D. (ed.). *Viedenská arbitráž v roku 1938 a jej európske súvislosti*. Bratislava: Ševt, pre Úrad vlády SR, 2008, p. 77-93.

602 ZAHORAN, Cs. „Addig a békesség, míg szomszéd akarja“ Trianon és a magyar-szomszéd viszony napjainkban. In *Történelmi szemle*, LXI. évfolyam, 2019, 4 szám, p. 731-744; PITAŘ, M. Trianonská smlouva a její reflexe v současné maďarské politice. In *Acta Fakultaty filozofické Západočeské univerzity v Plzni*. 2012, No. 3, p. 121-143. <http://dspace.zcu/bitstream/handle...Pitar.pdf?>; KOVÁČ, D. Slovenské dejiny a „zrozumiteľná oblasť historického výskumu“. In KOVÁČ, D. (ed.). *Slovenské dejiny v dejinách Európy: vybrané kapitoly*. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV: Veda, 2015, p. 13-30; *Sme*, 13. 2. 2008, KOVÁČ, D. Nevyhnutný rozpad. <http://komentare.sme.sk/c/3726188/priciny-trianonu.html>; *Sme*, 13. 2. 2008, ROMSICS, I. Príčiny

that are identical, yet different interpretations have been created by two separate narratives of historical events from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a Slovak and a Hungarian one.

The Treaty of Trianon and Trianon as symbols of the most fundamental change in the arrangement of Central Europe in modern history are an event that affected not only the region but also the historical consciousness of the inhabitants. Trianon also allows historians and political scientists to study the mechanism of the disintegration and emergence of states, the influence of ethnicity, the national or nationality factor, as well as nationalism. It also allows observation of the way in which a historical event is instrumentalized in historical memory depending on ethnicity and other socio-demographic factors. The fact remains that the Treaty of Trianon “*confirmed by international law the demise of the Kingdom of Hungary, codified the formation of successor states within the new borders, including Hungary. For the first time since, it established a border between Slovakia and Hungary, thus defining the term Slovakia as a specific historical, geographical and legal unit in an international legal document of paramount importance.*”<sup>603</sup>

At the same time, it is necessary to emphasize that from a political point of view, in this period, all vectors of controlled reaction – the disintegration of the Kingdom of Hungary, led to the creation of smaller nation-states, including the Czechoslovak Republic and Hungary. It was a manifestation of the cyclical process of construction and deconstruction, fragmentation and centralization, integration and disintegration, present in various forms in human society. In this area and under the influence of various circumstances (international politics of powers, developments on the fronts of the “Great War”, the inability of Hungarian elites to respond to modernization directions in the society, oppression and assimilation of ethnically different communities...) the focus of development was disintegration, fragmentation of state so that later it could come to new forms of integration and centralization at a higher level and on different political and ideological foundations.

The consequences of the creation of the successor states (and the Treaty of Trianon) manifested themselves not only in political life but also in the life of the population. Population migration on both sides of the border was set to motion. As a result of the peace treaty, 350 – 426 thousand people moved to Hungary. About 107,000 people moved from Slovakia.<sup>604</sup> The division of the country also affected a large number of

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Trianonu. <http://komentare.sme.sk/c/3726188/priciny-trianonu.html> This is not the only case in history where the temporary disintegration or dissolution of a state body is not considered an obstacle to continuity. Each case is different, but in the sense of Beneš's concept of continuity, Czechoslovakia, later represented by the temporary Czechoslovak establishment in London, was considered to exist, without interrupting continuity. From the latest literature on the topic, e.g. GERLOCH, A. – ŽÁK, Krzyžanková K. (eds.). *Ústavní kontinuita České republiky s československou tradicí*. Praha: vyd. Aleš Čeněk, 2019, 720 p.

603 HRONSKÝ, M. Ako sa Slovensko vyčlenilo z Uhorska. Trianonská mierová zmluva. In *Historická revue*, 2001, No. 1. <http://www.historiarevue.sk/historia-2001-01/trianon.htm>

604 KOLLAI, I. Psychológia mierovej zmluvy. In DEMMEL, J. a kol. *Rozštiepená minulosť. Kapitoly z dejín Slovákov a Maďarov*. Budapest: Terra Cognita, 2008, p. 129; In more detail: PAS-

middle – class members who lived in Budapest but came from territories beyond the borders of the new Hungary. This broke many family, professional and friendly ties. Both states were bound by peace treaties to respect human and national rights, yet they sought, to varying degrees, to assimilate the other – language population. Even in Czechoslovakia, which created conditions for autonomous life of minorities (political parties, associations, culture, minority education, use of language ...) the state created barriers (in the granting of citizenship, importing the press from Hungary, St. Stephen's Day celebrations ...), justified by fears of the disintegration of the state by Hungarian revisionism and irredentism.<sup>605</sup>

Storing this situation in the historical memory of Hungarians hit by the events of Trianon, regardless of which side of the border they remained, created the preconditions for transmitting this painful and negative information through family memory, memories and conversations in intergenerational transformation further, essentially to the present.

From the first moment, Slovakia's reactions to Trianon were conditioned by the activities of Hungary and its fight against the "unjust peace dictate". The differences between the representatives of the various political trends in Hungary were in how to come to terms with this injustice (temporarily), in what way and to what extent to achieve the revision of the Treaty of Trianon.

The interwar European minority policy guaranteed by the peace treaties and the League of Nations sought to create the conditions in which ethnic minorities would have guaranteed collective rights.<sup>606</sup> Not only Hungary but also many Hungarians across the border perceived the separation from the mother nation after the First World War as temporary and considered the peace treaty unfair. They considered the existence of the entire Hungarian nation in one state to be natural. Their loyalty to the Czechoslovak state was therefore conditional and never without limits. Hungarians in Slovakia started manifesting revisionism (no loyalty) or activism (temporary loyalty). *Political representatives of the Hungarian minority, regardless of their political orientation, and the minority public themselves have indicated since the beginning of the Czechoslovak Republic that this state was created against their will.*<sup>607</sup>

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TOR, P. A trianoni békekötés történetírásának színeváltozásai. In Zeidler, M. *Trianon*. Budapest: Osiris, 2003, p. 881-888; ZEIDLER, M. *A revíziós gondolat*. Budapest: Osiris, 2001.

605 MICHELA, M. Svätostefanská idea a jej odraz vo formovaní identít obyvatelstva na Slovensku – ako predmet výskumu. In MARUŠIAK, J. – FERENCOVÁ, M. (eds.). *Teoretické prístupy k identitám a ich praktické aplikácie*. Bratislava: Veda, 2005, p. 124; TAJTÁK, L. a kol. *Dejiny Rožňavy*. Košice: Východoslovenské vydavateľstvo, 1978, p. 109.

606 In more detail: FERENČUHOVÁ, B. Stav výskumu medzinárodnej ochrany menšín na Slovensku po roku 1989. In ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.). *Národ a národnosti. Stav výskumu po roku 1989 a jeho perspektívy*. Prešov: Universum, 2004, p. 13-31.

607 ZEMKO, M. Politické strany a ich voličstvo v novozámockom a košickom volebnom kraji v parlamentných voľbách za prvej Československej republiky. In ŠVORC, P. – DANILÁK, M. – HEPPNER, H. (eds.). *Veľká politika a malé regióny 1918 – 1939, ...* p. 202; OLEJNÍK, M. Transformácia identity spišských Nemcov v závislosti na meniacich sa štátoprávnych a sociálnych podmienkach Slovenska v 20. storočí. In BAČOVÁ, V. – KUSÁ, Z. (eds.). *Identity v meniacej sa spoločnosti*. Košice: Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV, 1997, p. 145-154.

Attempts to completely revise and restore the integrity of Historic Hungary (integral revision – an effort to restore the Kingdom of Hungary to its original area before 1918) appeared to a large extent mainly in the interwar period and during World War II<sup>608</sup> and definitely disappeared as a significant or real political factor after 1945. The effort for ethnographic revision with the support of Germany and Italy was successfully completed by the Vienna Arbitration of 2 November 1938.<sup>609</sup>

In politics, the Slovak “trauma” caused by the Vienna Arbitration is comparable, with regard to consequences for people with the consequences of Trianon. A new phenomenon was the fact that while people fled after Trianon, after the Vienna Arbitration, as well as after the Second World War they were expelled, with added serious factor of direct physical violence against a minority group, and that is a major difference.

The Czechoslovak response to the events of the war was the effort to create a nation-state of Czechs and Slovaks, without non-Slavic national minorities after World War II, and post-war anti-minority legislation.<sup>610</sup>

In international politics, the last significant attempt to implement an ethnographic approach to setting boundaries was Hungary’s effort at the Paris Conference in 1946 to achieve a border revision in relation to Czechoslovakia, which coincided with the Vienna Arbitration Line.<sup>611</sup>

At present, the principle of (at least) ethnic revision is supported by groups that operate within Hungarian society and use the very important religious ground in terms of the emotional and psychological effect.

The period of socialism tabooed national issues in both public and party discourse. This also concerned all the disputable issues, including Trianon and the Vienna Arbitration. Hungarian Kádárist policy was strongly influenced by the Soviet leadership and could not or did not want to raise such a question. But even Hungarian Marxist historiography did not abandon the thesis of the unjust imperialist division of Europe. Only in the short period of the Czechoslovak reform spring did the national issues appear in Slovakia with unprecedented intensity and often grew into internal Slo-

608 BARCZA, Gy. *Diplomata-emlékeim, 1911 – 1945*. I. kötet. Város: Európa-História, 1994. In KOLLAI, I. *Psychológia mierovej zmluvy*. In DEMMEL, J. a kol. *Rozštiepená minulosť. Kapitoly z dejín Slovákov a Maďarov*. Budapest: Terra Cognita, 2008, p. 151.

609 ŠUTAJ, Š. Trianon a szlovákiaia történelmi emlékezetben. In *Limes*, XXIV évfolyam, 89 szám, 2011.1., p.71-86; ŠUTAJ, Š. Variace stop Trianonu v politické paměti. In DEJMEK, J. – LOUŽEK, M. (eds.). *Trianonská smlouva. Devadesát let poté*. Praha: Centrum pro ekonomiku a politiku, 2010, p. 69-97.

610 In this publication we will not address this issue in more depth, it has been sufficiently elaborated in many works, for example: ŠUTAJ, Š. (ed.). *Dekréty E. Beneša v povojnovom období*. Prešov: Universum 2004; ŠUTAJ, Š. – MOSNÝ, P. – OLEJNÍK, M. *Prezidentské dekréty Edvarda Beneša v povojnovom Slovensku*. Bratislava: Veda, 2002.

611 More detail in ŠUTAJ, Š. *Parížska konferencia 1946 a mierová zmluva s Maďarskom*. Prešov: 2014. Let us remind that Hungary, in the peace treaty of February 1947, committed to prevent the creation of organizations that would have a revisionist anti-democratic character and had to destroy all propaganda irredentist and revisionist literature before.

vak-Hungarian conflicts.<sup>612</sup> During this period, the allies in the Warsaw Pact promoted a nihilistic approach to revision, which they replaced with the concept of building bridges (the concept of minorities as a bridge between “nation” states).

### Trianon and the Present

When asked by *Hospodárske noviny* in 2011 “*Why did Fidesz’s first steps after last year’s election victory concern Trianon peace agreement and Hungarian minorities?*”, Fidesz party representative László Kövér replied: “*Firstly because last year was the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Trianon. Secondly, these symbolic steps required less preparatory work than is needed in the economy. Thirdly, without a certain spiritual and moral revival, we will not be able to renew the whole of Hungarian society.*”<sup>613</sup>

After the regime change in Hungary, the political spectrum changed fundamentally as well, but two tendencies, the right-wing, which sees Trianon trauma as a source of “national” policy, and the left-wing, which would prefer to ignore the problem, remained. The silence of the Kádárist socialist regime about Trianon was very quickly replaced by the populist rhetoric of the new representations, which saw Trianon as a pillar of building the unity of the Hungarian nation. According to P. Lendvai, “*While in 2002 around 18 % of the adult population thought that the consequences of the peace treaty should never have been accepted, this percentage has increased two and a half times to this day (2010 – authors). Moreover, one in three in this group (missing “thinks” – authors) that they must not give up any means to reconnect the lost territories to Hungary... These figures reflect the serious and at the same time absurd escalation of the attitude of Hungarian society.*”<sup>614</sup>

The fact that the view of Trianon in Hungary is unambiguous is confirmed by the results of a May 2020 survey of the perception of Trianon in Hungarian society by a research team led by B. Ablonczy. According to the survey, 94 % of Hungarian citizens consider the Treaty of Trianon to be unfair, 85 % consider Trianon to be the greatest tragedy of the Hungarian nation, 84 % think that a “Hungarian is the one who is hurt by Trianon”, and 77 % of them say that the country has not yet overcome Trianon trauma.<sup>615</sup> We could expect similar results in the Hungarian population in Slovakia.

Based on the representative research conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in cooperation with the Institute for Public Affairs and the Czech Centre for Public Opinion Research of the Institute of Sociology AS CR after 2015, only less than a third of the population in Slovakia today feel nostalgia for the downfall of Austria-Hungary. Almost half think that breaking the mon-

612 ŠUTAJ Š. Slovenskí Maďari a rok 1968. In LONDÁK, M. – SIKORA, S. (eds.). *Rok 1968 a jeho miesto v našich dejinách*. Bratislava: Veda, 2009, p. 194-209.

613 *Hospodárske noviny*, 6. 6. 2011, Každý váš politik má v sebe kúsok Slotu.

614 LENDVAI, P. *Moja premrhaná krajina. Maďarsko na prelome*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2012, p. 93.

615 *Denník N*, 4. 6. 2020, Petőcz, K. Nech žije Trianon! Nech zhyynie Trianon!

archy was not a mistake. Mainly citizens of Slovak nationality perceive the demise of the monarchy mostly without sentiment; they do not miss especially the Kingdom of Hungary from the turn of the century when Slovaks were exposed to national oppression and restrictions on political rights. Respondents of Hungarian nationality had a different opinion: almost half of them think that breaking Austria-Hungary was not right. According to research by the Bratislava National Education Centre in 2017, “ethnic” Hungarians in Slovakia still consider the Treaty of Trianon to be one of the most negative events affecting Hungarians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and two-fifths consider the dissolution of Austria-Hungary to be the wrong solution.

Political differences are also interesting: the breaking of Austria-Hungary is negatively viewed by the majority of supporters of the SMK, which is close to V. Orbán, while this is not the case for Hungarian supporters of Most-Híd. According to Z. Bútorová, the policy of the current “Orbánist” Hungary contributes to the frustration of the past, which – as Hungarian social psychologist Gy. Csepeli said – instead of trying to overcome the trauma, is constantly pouring salt in this historic wound.<sup>616</sup> The current perception, as clearly shown in the research we carried out on representative samples, also shows that Trianon and the post-Hungarian anti-Hungarian legislation have the same position among the historical traumas of the Hungarians as the Vienna Arbitration in the Slovak historical consciousness.<sup>617</sup>

With regard to official policy, we can accept the words of political scientist L. Öllös that Hungary is not currently trying to revise the existing system of Central Europe, as nationalist circles in Slovakia are trying to say. “*All Hungarian governments unequivocally accept the validity of the peace treaties. There are no movements in Hungary that would like to open this.*”<sup>618</sup> During the Antall and Horn governments, Hungary signed neighbourhood agreements with Slovakia, but also with Croatia, Ukraine and Romania. These included clauses on Hungarian minorities, but also the important conclusion that the protection of minorities is not the exclusive responsibility of the states concerned, but also the subject of legitimate attention by the international community. At the same time, the Hungarian side reaffirmed the final recognition of the borders.<sup>619</sup> However, Trianon and the removal of this “injustice” remained an important element of Hungarian domestic and foreign policy. Even 100 years later, many solutions carry a Trianon imprint and we can decipher them as a response of both Hungarian elites and Hungarian society, though already partly or fully differentiated on both sides of the border, to the events related to Trianon.

We can perceive this imprint in two focal lines: in symbolic historical memory and in current politics.

616 *Denník N*, 26. 10. 2018, BÚTOROVÁ, Z. Ako po storočí vidíme prvú ČSR.

617 ŠUTAJ, Š. History and National Identity. In SWOBODA, H. – VIERSMA, J. M. (eds.). *Politics of the Past: The Use and Abuse of History*. Bruxelles: The Socialist Group in the European Parliament, 2009, p. 193-204.

618 *Hospodárske noviny*, 30. 4. 2010. Orbánov „zlý muž“ sa vracia. <https://hnonline.sk/svet/323947-orbanov-zly-muz-sa-vracia>

619 LENDVAI, P. *Moja premrhaná krajina. Maďarsko na prelome*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2012, p. 96.



## Politics and its Current Responses to Trianon

At present and in the monitored years, we can consider the national policy *in the form of a cross-border vision of the unity of the Hungarian nation* as the dominant response of Hungarian politics to Trianon.<sup>620</sup> Commemoration of Trianon in historical memory, as part of the formation of the historical consciousness of Hungary, is an important part of it.

The main line of Trianon trauma is stored in the Hungarian historical memory in the form of a cultural code that has been cultivated in Hungarian society by all generations after Trianon, including the current one. The word Trianon has become not only a historical fact but a verbal symbol of a national disaster, which has been built in the Hungarian society for many generations as a symbol of the Hungarian national tragedy. It is an emotional state. Trianon is a symbol of national humiliation, misery, suffering (Hungarian Calvary). Generations have been brought up, openly or furtively, to keep Trianon part of a negative collective memory, a memento of the nation's downfall to the lowest possible level, from which the path leads only to a better national future for Hungary. It was in the period under review that this phenomenon became part of a systematic policy that sophisticatedly influenced Hungarians in a redefined homeland, the Carpathian Basin. The transformation of Trianon into historical memory is finished in the line of strategically formed policy, which was enshrined in legislation (Act on Citizenship of Foreign Hungarians, Act on National Solidarity Day, Election Act), constitutional enshrinement in articles of the new Constitution of 2011, application of laws in political and pedagogical practice (e.g. in the form of a handbook for schools), as well as the financial provision within the subsidy policy in the defined area of the Carpathian Basin, which is the place for the policy of Hungarianism. It includes the possibility to obtain citizenship for foreign Hungarians and the related active and passive right to vote.

There are identical but also different elements of the perception of Trianon between the political elites in Hungary and the Slovak Hungarians, with regards to the historical document itself, but also to the perception of Trianon as a symbol of how it instrumentalized itself in historical consciousness and historical memory.

From the point of view of the Slovak population, a large degree of agreement prevails in the perception of Trianon. Trianon did not define itself as a nation uniting historical event. It remained in the public in the form of a neutral historical fact, and in politics and journalism it is defined more as a symbol of the threat to Slovak state-

620 The chairman of the Republican Council of Fidesz, L. Kövér, said in July 2007 at a meeting of Hungarian students and teachers of the Carpathian Basin entitled "Hungarian Calvary": "This is not an attempt to revise, but it must be said that Greater Hungary has not been lost. They redrew its political boundaries at most, but Hungary is where the Hungarians live, even where the Hungarians no longer live. Hungary is where its borders are in our souls," (Sme, 7. 7. 2007, Kövér: Veľké Uhorsko sa nestratilo.) In 2010, in connection with the anniversary of Trianon, he said in a speech in the Hungarian Parliament about the Kingdom of Hungary: "But it is not even necessary for it to rise from the dead, because it lives in our souls, culture, our language, in the churches we build and in our interpersonal contacts." (Pravda, 21. 5. 2010. Uhorsko nemožno oživiť, lebo žije, zaznelo v maďarskom parlamente.)

hood. In the Slovak collective memory, therefore, it is given a position, similarly as it is with the Hungarians, although for other reasons and elsewhere, in the negative field of the emotional scale. For both Slovaks and Hungarians, the concept – the symbol of Trianon – runs shivers down the spine, for the former it is due to a longstanding feeling of danger, and for the latter, it is due to a longstanding feeling of a national disgrace. In Slovak historical memory, Trianon has a place together with terms such as irredentism and revisionism. It is associated with feelings of threat, it is used (abused) in Slovak-Hungarian interstate relations and national minority policy to dramatize the political situation, to use the Hungarian card in political agitation and whenever it is necessary to mobilize the nation against the Hungarian threat (such a policy was typical for the HZDS, the SNS and Smer).

The Slovak trauma from Trianon is manifested not only by the constant suspicion of own Hungarian minority in Slovakia, but especially of Hungarian political representations and their efforts to change borders and annex southern Slovakia to Hungary or even to restore the historic St. Stephen's Hungary. The ruling coalitions or their parts associated any attempt by Hungary or Slovak Hungarians to change the status, powers, competencies, improve the quality of life or strengthen human and minority rights with an attempt to revise Trianon. Trianon is a magic word in Slovak politics, which, under the influence of national populism and anti-Hungarian rhetoric of political leaders, as well as moderate patriots and lukewarm nationalists, mobilizes for caution and distrust towards the Hungarians. This is also one of the reasons why Slovak representations are not able to create a positive nationality policy, they do not treat Slovak Hungarians as an entity building a civic-oriented state, the Slovak Republic, but as temporary tenants living in the Slovak land.

The extent of coping with Trianon is different, as is the way of its remembrance/commemoration. In Slovakia, there is no feeling of nostalgia for the Kingdom of Hungary, compared to a slight nostalgia for Czechoslovakia. The time factor certainly plays a role in this too. However, the difference between the perception of Trianon in Hungary and Slovakia shows that no commemoration mechanisms have been established in Slovakia in relation to Trianon. There have been no rituals, symbols, commemorative celebrations. In historical consciousness and historical memory, Trianon is a fact, a historical event that took place. It fulfilled its historical role, confirmed the borders of the Czechoslovak Republic and thus created the historical borders of Slovakia. There is no reason for commemorations, memorial days, or monuments and memorials. In Slovakia, the days that are celebrated or commemorated are the Martin Declaration (30 October 1918, when the Slovak national representations officially joined the Czechoslovak Republic) and the Declaration of the Czechoslovak Republic. Only in 2010, at the time of the adoption of the Hungarian Law on National Unity Day, there were calls for protests against the building of anti-Trianon monuments. In some circles of Slovak society, the law was understood as a call for re-drawing the borders of Central Europe through new political instruments, which was perceived as “*dangerous and generally unacceptable*”.<sup>621</sup> On the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of

621 *Pravda*, 1. 6. 2010, Ďalší maďarský zákon vyvolal u slovenských politikov obavy.

Trianon, anti-Trianon monuments appeared in Slovakia, for example in Komárno, Bratislava (Main Post Office) or in Petržalka. The chairman of the SNS, J. Slota, announced that a referendum on autonomy would be announced in the south of Slovakia within five years, and subsequently, the southern territories would be separated from Slovakia as Kosovo from Serbia.<sup>622</sup> The commemoration of Trianon in 2010 was the result of an exceptional malfunction in one of the lines of Slovak politics – but it has not become a ritual or a tradition (yet). Slovak society does not need it, it is useless, and therefore it does not even have a chance to anchor itself in the historical memory. The fact that it was motivated by the events in Hungary, for which the anniversary of Trianon started a new phase of its commemoration, is unquestionable. The Slovak nationalist line of minority politics would not be able to act on their own without the “mover” from Hungary. There is no positive program and a negative one is only a response to Hungarian national stimuli.

In June 2010 The Tükör Association also wanted to place a monumental column commemorating the anniversary of Trianon in Komárno in the courtyard of the parish of the Reformed Church. However, they did not receive a permit from the Nitra self-governing region.<sup>623</sup> A conference of Hungarian “patriots” on Trianon was held in the Officer’s Pavilion belonging to the town of Komárno. According to the program, a lecture “on the Holy Crown” was to be given and the conference was to end with an “oath of the Holy Crown.” The main speaker at the ceremony, E. Raffay, former Secretary of the Government of J. Antall between 1990 and 1994 pointed out that at the beginning of the 1990’s Hungary did not take the opportunity to attack Trianon, as it was owned by international capital. He also criticized Most-Híd, which declares cooperation with Slovaks. The program ended in the centre of Komárno with a concert of nationalist bands.<sup>624</sup>

In the historical memory of the Hungarian population, emotions have been part of the commemoration of Trianon and they increase the feelings of injustice. They should create the conditions for coping with Trianon in the form of social resistance, and an important part of such a policy was the vision that the future would change this unfavourable situation and bring the possibility of a better life, social change.

For the Hungarians, Trianon is one of the most tragic events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>625</sup> regardless of the opinion of others. The Hungarian expert literature clearly explains why the Trianon is a trauma for Hungary. One of the important reasons is certainly the fact that the Peace Treaty of Trianon turned a major monarchy into a small, “insignificant” state. All political parties considered the Trianon border to be unfair and assumed that one day it would be necessary to rectify the peace revision of the Trianon borders and establish them on an ethnic basis.<sup>626</sup>

622 *Sme*, 1. 6. 2010, SNS na hraniciach v Komárne osadí pamätník; *Sme*, 3. 6. 2010, Maďari chcú zopakovať kosovský scenár; *Sme*, 1. 6. 2010, Občania Slovenska nepotrebujú vytvárať nepriateľa.

623 *Pravda*, 4. 6. 2010, Na výročie Trianonu bude polícia v Komárne v pohotovosti.

624 *Sme*, 4. 6. 2010, *Trianon Komárno nerozhádal*.

625 ROMSICS, I. *Trianonská mierová zmluva*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2006.

626 ROMSICS, I. *Parížska mierová zmluva z roku 1947*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2008, p. 31.

## Commemoration Policy

Trianon became part of a rediscovered or revived historical memory and in Hungary, it also became part of an anti-communist policy that suppressed Trianon's memory for many years. Gradually, the individual components of constructing the national past were created, with major use of the reconstruction of rituals from the interwar and war period. Analysts sometimes attributed this not to the politicization of the Trianon agenda, but to the Hungarian nature. Former Ambassador to Hungary Š. Markuš, whose family came to Slovakia as part of the post-war population exchange between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, wrote: "*Hungarians really like statues and monuments. They enjoy commemorating historical losses in battles. They celebrate defeats with pomp. The heroes of defeats receive more honours than the winners. The Hungarians cheer at points when they should be crying.*"<sup>627</sup> The important fact is that the Hungarian nation acts like a victim during these commemorations. This can also be included among the important features of the commemoration of Trianon. Martyrdom for the homeland, suffering, division, emigration, expulsion, captivity in Russian gulags, persecution in the successor states created a cult of suffering and threats that were implanted in the consciousness of the population at different times and by different groups and played an important role not only in mobilizing for national unity and national policy but also in the creation of military and paramilitary units, which were to be the guarantors of righting the wrong. Remembrance, nursing own misery, looking for the one responsible for this misfortune, all this creates emotions of common suffering, belonging, exclusion in commemorations and memories. It is reinforced by common rituals, laying wreaths, pathetic speeches, mobilizing slogans, and manifesting the irreplaceability of speakers in the common struggle to right the wrong. Anthems are played, old or new songs are sung, slogans with mobilizing character are repeated, and the symbolism of past glorious times is revived. It is a typical feature of the commemorative mentality.<sup>628</sup> In the case of the Hungarians, it is also linked to other negative events in Hungarian history and creates their networking into a series of tragic misfortunes that have affected the Hungarian nation, regardless of which side of the border it is currently on. This line runs throughout history. Battle of Mohács (1526), revolution 1848/49 – Világos and the execution of Hungarian generals, defeats in wars, Trianon, the peace treaty of 1947, the massacre of Hungarians in 1956 by the Soviet occupiers, and the unfortunate communist regime, which they would rather exclude from the continuous history of the Hungarian nation.

Both in Hungary and in southern Slovakia, symbols, memorials, flags, postcards, books, gatherings, memorial days and other expressions were appearing, completing the formal framework of commemorating Trianon. Everything was focused on the primary value category, the nation, as the most important value structure in Hun-

627 MARKUŠ, Š. *Maďari pod lupou*, Bratislava: Veda, 2003, p. 115.

628 DESPRET, V. *Ces émotions qui nous fabriquent. Ethnopsychologie des émotions*. Paris: Les empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2001.

garian society and Hungary in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and today. This was related to the fact that this historical memory extends beyond the current Hungarian borders, is not only timeless but also borderless. Not only does it have a martyrlife dimension, it also encompasses nostalgia for the past “*No Hungarian will be indifferent when it comes to monuments and jewels of architecture, graves and birthplaces of great kings and genius poets in Transylvania, Romania and Upper Hungary, the present-day Slovakia, rich in tradition. Novels and poems, paintings and family stories keep the memory of glorious but irrevocably past history.*”<sup>629</sup>

The revived memory also includes the restoration of old slogans and old rituals, which were pushed out of the official memory during the communist era. In the interwar period, the children started every day in school with prayer. “*I believe in one God, I believe in one homeland, I believe in the eternal truth of God, I believe in the resurrection of Hungary.*” This poem was chosen as a prayer of Hungarians at a competition in 1920 (the jury included representatives from MTA – the Hungarian Academy of Sciences).<sup>630</sup> Even today, this prayer has come to life in extreme groups of Hungarian nationalist organizations. Even today, this prayer has been revived in the extremist groups of Hungarian nationalist organizations. Calvary, the symbol of the suffering of Jesus Christ, is transferred as the symbol of the suffering of the Hungarian nation after Trianon, as a word and as part of a religious ritual. This includes the construction of monuments and memorials that symbolize the glorious Hungarian past or have an anti-Trianon character: e.g. the interest of the homeland, Arpad, St. Stephen’s, millennial, Trianon, “anti-Beneš”, displacement, Esterházy. Restoration of anti-Trianon statues and monuments, which were removed from public spaces after 1945, and the construction of new monuments became part of the mass culture. At present, they stand all over Hungary and in southern Slovakia and their number exceeds hundreds. They depict symbols (Trianon cross, Calvary, map of Hungary, the post-Trianon Hungarian borders, cities in the Kingdom of Hungary and many contemporary slogans about the irreconcilability with Trianon). This symbolism of Trianon does not differ either content or in form from the interwar symbolism<sup>631</sup>. It even tries to follow up on some of it (Calvary, iron log).<sup>632</sup>

According to young Hungarian historians, Trianon is a symbol of the overall sorrow of the Hungarians, and the stories associated with the conclusion of the Trianon peace have lost their emotional content. “... *lived and continue to live as folk*

629 LENDVAI, P. *Moja premrhaná krajina. Maďarsko na prelome*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2012, p. 94.

630 KOLLAI, I. Psychológia mierovej zmluvy. In DEMMEL, J. a kol. *Rozštiepená minulosť. Kapitoly z dejín Slovákov a Maďarov*. Budapest: Terra Recognita, 2008, p. 148. (Podľa GLATZ, F. Trianon és a magyar történelemtudomány. In Zeidler, M. *Trianon*. Budapest: Osiris, 2003, 818 p.

631 DEÁK, L. Trianonská mierová zmluva - minulosť a súčasnosť. In Slováci a ich národné bytie v Európe. Bratislava: Panslovanská únia, 2010, p. 153.

632 JUHÁSZ, I. L. Strážca Karpát a Železný turul. Znovuzrodenie jedného sochového typu z prvej svetovej vojny s aktualizovaným ideologickým obsahom. In *Fórum spoločenskovedná revue 2018*, Šamorín: Fórum inštitút pre výskum menšín, 2018, p. 23-63.

*superstitions, ... is the basis of a Trianon subculture, where Trianon is more form than content, In this subculture ... presented on banners, presented on cars or printed on T-shirts, seldom represent some mature revision idea. Their owners, who do not have clear political thinking, often do not know what these symbols mean. But they do present certain feelings, ... the feeling of being haunted by fate, as an important element of Hungarian self-reflection, is experienced personally by many more people than just those who express it with stickers or pictures on T-shirts. Peace is only an internal sorrow of the Hungarians.”*<sup>633</sup>

Sometimes, watching what is happening in Hungary as we commemorate the anniversaries of Trianon, we get the impression that time has stopped. Hungarian historian from Slovakia, A. Simon, writes about this: *“As for the ambiguous statements of some politicians from Hungary, they do not understand the essence of minority existence, in the same way as Slovaks do not. They look at “Felvidék” or Transylvania as if nothing has changed here since 1920, neither the ethnic conditions in the south of Slovakia, nor the thinking of Hungarians and Slovaks living here. Their statements are directed more towards the domestic political scene than to Slovakia or the Slovak Hungarians.”*<sup>634</sup>

In Hungarian society, while building a national collective cross-border identity, there has been the atmosphere, as pointed out by a part of the mainly liberally oriented scholars, in which it is unacceptable to criticize or not accept the official national policy. Given that the possibilities of influencing the Hungarian minority in Slovakia through various subsidy schemes by the Hungarian government, officially accepted by the 2003 agreement on the support of minority education and culture, are significant, the impact on Slovakia is not negligible. Part of working with emotions is creating a fictitious enemy and traitor, which can be anyone who does not behave like a Hungarian (whose children do not attend Hungarian schools, who lives in a mixed marriage, who does not support the program objectives of Hungarian cross-border policy). On the other side, there are the heroes who suffered for the nation and the homeland. Those who participated in Trianon, or its confirmation, e.g. at the Paris Conference in 1946, or would speak positively about Trianon or the Treaty of Trianon, become part of the negative historical heritage. They cannot be heroes, they can only be culprits, traitors or coerced collaborators with a greater or lesser degree of responsibility. The image of the enemy and those responsible, who were previously only the imperialist powers and the representatives of the successor states, expanded: “The Hungarians are also responsible for the Peace Treaty of Trianon, signed 95 years

633 KOLLAI, I. Revízia revízie. In DEMMEL, J. a kol. *Rozštiepená minulosť. Kapitoly z dejín Slovákov a Maďarov*. Budapest: Terra Cognita, 2008, p. 165.

634 *Sme*, 6. 10. 2007, Historik A. Simon: Máme právo nemať radi tie hranice. Journalist Peter Morvay wrote about this agenda: *“Hungarians, on the other hand, must understand that they must also behave in such a way that others can believe that they do not want the return of the Kingdom of Hungary or the revision of the borders. The declarations are useless, even if they are sincere, if ... in the office of every second secretary of the new government, a foreign visitor finds a map of Greater Hungary on the wall.”* (*Sme*, 4. 6. 2010. Morvay P. Trianon – fobia na oboch stranách).

ago,” said the Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister responsible for national policy Zs. Semjén at the National Unity Day event in Budapest. The Hungarians are to blame for Trianon, by failing to create sufficient diplomatic and military conditions to defend themselves against the dictates of the powers. “*Such a catastrophic peace could not have been forced on us had they not dissolved the Hungarian army and state, had they not demoralized the Hungarian nation at the most critical moment.*” The Chairman of the SMK, J. Berényi, called it a “political novelty”.<sup>635</sup>

### Remembrance of Trianon as Part of National Policy

After 1989, the issue of Trianon and the Trianon trauma was officially opened in Hungary at the initiative of the Hungarian Parliament, which commemorated it on 4 June 1990 as a “day of mourning”. Political circles took over the historical topic from the beginning. “*This trend continued on the following anniversaries of Trianon, and there were many comments in the press, intended mainly for foreign readers who did not know the causes of the disintegration of the Kingdom of Hungary and the essence of Trianon.*”<sup>636</sup>

Since 1990, remembrance events for Trianon have been held every year and have already become part of the official memory and official remembrance. L. Kövér, then Chairman of the Republic Council of Fidesz, said the most important task of the Trianon remembrance events was that “*finally a moral force can be felt, against which no political power can revolt after some time.*”<sup>637</sup> In 2008, according to the daily *Népszabadság*, there were about 150 Trianon events. As the remembrance became part of official policy, their role in the hierarchy of the values in the Hungarian society increased. Both domestic policy and the Hungarians abroad took part in the events.

On the occasion of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Trianon on 4 June 2010, the parliament passed a law on Fidesz’s proposal, declaring 4 June the Day of National Unity of all Hungarians.<sup>638</sup> Thus it achieved the highest position in the hierarchy of commemora-

635 *Aktuálne*, 4. 5. 2015, Trianon sme si zavinili sami... <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/trianon-sme-si-zavinili-sami-tvrdi-podpredseda-madarskej-vlady-semjen/zahranicie/europa/>

636 DEÁK, L. Trianonská mierová zmluva - minulosť a súčasnosť. In *Slováci a ich národné bytie v Európe*. Bratislava: Panslovenská únia, 2010, p. 148-149.

637 *Sme*, 8. 7. 2007. Kövér: Veľké Uhorsko sa nestratilo..

638 *Pravda*, 9. 5. 2010. Fidesz chce uzákonit’ pamiatku Trianonu (-ik) The proposal of the law stated: “*We, members of the National Assembly of the Republic of Hungary, who believe that God is the master of history... commemorate one of Hungary’s greatest historical tragedies, the peace dictate signed on 4 June 1920, which shattered historic Hungary and pushed the Hungarian nation under the sovereignty of several states... The disintegration of the Kingdom of Hungary is described as “the unjust and undeserved rupture of the Hungarian nation caused by foreign powers... attempts made in history to resolve issues arising from the Trianon peace dictatorship, including the new amendments of borders done with the help of foreign powers, as well as the efforts to destroy national identity under the ideology of internationalism have failed.*” The problems associated with Trianon “*can only be solved within the rules of international law.*” At the same time, the text called for respect for “*the right of national communities*

tive values. The National Unity Day Act was supported by 302 deputies, with 55 Hungarian MP voting against it.<sup>639</sup> The Socialists in particular were opposed to it, they wanted the wording of the law to include the sentence that “*the Trianon wound cannot be healed by the revision of borders.*” They also criticized the preamble referring to God as the “master of history” and the reluctance of the parliamentary majority to mention unity within the EU in the text.<sup>640</sup>

The law was supported by political authorities, including President L. Sólyom, the President of the MTA F. Glatz. In 2010, events related to Trianon took place throughout the week. The week ended with a scientific conference of historians. In Slovakia, President I. Gašparovič, KDH chairman J. Figel’ and the SDKÚ representatives expressed their surprise, or rather concern regarding the law, as they emphasized the importance of the Treaty of Trianon for Slovak statehood, questioned the meaning of the law and the “Europeanism” of its submitters.

In a statement on the National Unity Day Act, the Slovak Government stated that Hungarian politics would drive a wedge into friendly coexistence between nations and states and that it was an expression of open disrespect for international peace treaties and modern European policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Slovak Government called it a questioning of the Treaty of Trianon and the territorial arrangement after the First World War. The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned Slovak Ambassador to Budapest, P. Weiss, with respect to the aggravated mutual relations. The Ambassador was handed over the English translation of the law, with a note that the standard does not contain any mentions of territorial revisionism, but instead emphasizes mutual respect and cooperation between sovereign states.<sup>641</sup> The first statements of the SMK representatives emphasized that the law is being demonized in Slovakia: “*the SMK is convinced that the obsession of the public and part of the media with what is happening in the Hungarian parliament is starting to be counterproductive to future cooperation between Slovakia and Hungary.*” The SMK also refused accusations of revisionism “... *no one will find the questioning of the Trianon borders and the call to change the current state borders here. This document talks about equal states cooperating precisely with regard to the rights of national communities, and*

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*to internal self-determination” and condemned “any attempt to assimilate parts of the nation living in a minority in the territory of the states concerned”. According to the proposal, “every member and every community of Hungary placed under the sovereignty of several states is part of a unified Hungarian nation, the unity of which across state borders is a reality and at the same time a decisive element of the individual and collective identity of Hungarians. Based on the practice acceptable in Europe, Hungary supports the natural right to different kinds of collective autonomy. ... The National Assembly of the Republic of Hungary considers it its duty to rebuke the people of the nation living today and future generations, forever bearing in mind the national tragedy caused by the Trianon peace dictatorship ...to contribute to the strengthening of national unity.”*

639 *Sme*, 1. 6. 2010, SNS na hraniciach v Komárne osadí pamätník.

640 *Pravda*, 2. 6. 2019, Drábek, I. Maďarski socialisti kritizujú trianonský zákon. [http://spravy.pravda.sk/madarski-socialisti-kritizuju-trianonsky-zakon-f6q/-sk\\_svet.asp?c=A100602\\_134612\\_sk\\_svet\\_p29](http://spravy.pravda.sk/madarski-socialisti-kritizuju-trianonsky-zakon-f6q/-sk_svet.asp?c=A100602_134612_sk_svet_p29).

641 *Sme*, 10. 6. 2010, Maďari si zavolali na koberček slovenského veľvyslancu.



*it also talks about national unity over existing state borders.” In connection with the adoption of the law, the chairman of Most-Híd B. Bugár traditionally chose more cautious rhetoric, neither servile nor condemning. “We need to learn from history, not make the same mistakes and build a stronger, more stable future. Our party is about the future. This means that it is possible to remember what happened, what mistakes were made by the representatives at the time and not to repeat those mistakes. If this is what they mean, it’s fine.”<sup>642</sup> The new national policy permeated the whole of Hungarian society. It included a massive manipulation of the historical memory of the population, in which all sections of society, including science and education, were involved. This was the subject of strong criticism in the surrounding countries. In this context, the prominent Slovak historian R. Holec drew attention to the servility of the social sciences, especially historiography, when looking at their own history and the history of the states in which the Hungarians live. “Hungarian historiography, which for decades belonged among the top in Europe in terms of methodology, scope and depth of research, closes in on its academic museum and voluntarily releases its positions in public opinion to various right-wing, even extremist structures, who under the guise of the plurality of opinions with the silent (or apparent) support of the ruling elites revive the spirit of Greater Hungary, cultivate Trianon rituals, and give the green light to various pseudo-scientific subcultures, which are totally marginalized everywhere in normal countries. This (still) applies to Slovakia as well. Renowned Hungarian historians were silent when the law legitimizing the Trianon rituals was passed, they were silent when the new constitution was proposed, and they did not realize the old historical truth. The absence of civic courage and the obvious opportunism of academic structures, which is in fact nothing more than a silent collaboration with the state power, will in no way save them from it.”<sup>643</sup>*

### **About Emotions and Empathy**

Historical memory in Slovakia and Hungary perceives the Trianon and the Trianon Peace Treaty and its context differently, and therefore it becomes a suitable topic when it is necessary to mobilize citizens (voters) against “enemies” at home or abroad, regardless of whether it is Hungary or Slovakia. Hungarian public opinion is mainly determined by feelings of loss and injustice. It is a feeling of loss of the integrity of the national community, the historical homeland that created the Hungarian national society and culture, providing defence for the Hungarians and non-Hungarian peoples of the Kingdom of Hungary. However, these “advantages” and “conveniences” of the Hungarian elites can no longer be appreciated by the surrounding nations, they do not want to turn the wheel of time back and do not share the Hungarian romantic view of the Hungarian political elites on the “beautiful” past. The degree of reflection on the wrongs of “our” and “foreign” is proving to be an important factor in the objectification of history. On the other hand, it must be said that it is not only how

642 *Pravda*, 1. 6. 2010. Další maďarský zákon vyvolal u slovenských politikov obavy.

643 *Sme*, 14. 1. 2012. Holec, R. Maďarský panteón.

we perceive the Hungarian nostalgia for the Kingdom of Hungary. It is also about the extent of understanding that more than half a million Hungarians got into a new state body, which was foreign to them and has mostly considered them a hostile element for the last hundred years. Historians see the solution in empathy. Mutual understanding of attitudes and feelings. Hungarian historian L. Szarka, living in both Slovakia and Hungary, is one of those who see a solution in empathy. *“Slovaks must understand that the Hungarians are rightly hurt by Trianon and the Hungarians must understand that Slovaks had the right to self-determination.”*<sup>644</sup> A historian at J. Selye University in Komárno, A. Simon, described how such empathy should work in the case of Trianon. *“In the case of Trianon, it is really necessary to separate two things: the first is the disintegration of the historic Kingdom of Hungary and, with it, the establishment of Czechoslovakia. The second issue concerns the specific borders in which Czechoslovakia was founded and which were very far from ethnic borders. It might not be a problem for Hungarians to accept the former, if they did not consider the latter very unfair – the fact that so many Hungarians, against their will or without questions, found themselves living in another state. In this case, the Slovak side could recognize that the borders could have been fairer, that it was possible to determine them closer to ethnic reality. ... I don’t think that, apart from a few extremists, there are Slovak Hungarians who are seriously thinking about changing the borders of Trianon. Slovak Hungarians have already come to terms with them, they are angrier about the fact that the majority of society interprets these borders as a historical necessity and a manifestation of God’s justice. Allow us not to love these borders.”*<sup>645</sup> Š. Markuš, the former Slovak Ambassador to Hungary also spoke about empathy with regard to Trianon: *“According to some Hungarian politicians, only the one who is hurt by Trianon is a real Hungarian... At that time, they lost two thirds of the territory and half of the population. It is similar to degrading a general, and that feeling of degradation persists. However, many Hungarians are unable to understand that before Trianon, the Slovaks suffered in a common Hungarian state. If we agreed that they suffered after Trianon and the Slovaks before it, it would be fine. However, it is not possible.”*<sup>646</sup>

Politicians in both Budapest and Bratislava lack exactly what they demand from their neighbours – empathy. *“We must strive for reciprocity with neighbouring nations. If, after a thorough self-examination, we show empathy for our foreign partners, we will always be able to look them calmly in the eye and insist on our positive opinion,”* said Hungarian President L. Sólyom at the meeting on the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Peace Treaty of Trianon.<sup>647</sup>

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644 *Sme*, 3. 6. 2005, Trianon bol rozhodnutím „o nás bez nás“

645 *Sme*, 6. 10. 2007, Historik Attila Simon: Máme právo nemať radi tie hranice.

646 *Pravda*, 13. 9. 2006, Markuš, Š. *Sme* odsúdení žiť spolu.

647 *Sme*, 4. 6. 2010, Trianon sa nepáči ani socialistom, no k Fideszu sa nepridali.

The opening of the Treaty of Trianon at the political level precludes normal relations with any government in Slovakia.<sup>648</sup> In May 2010, I. Radičová described the Hungarian remembrance of Trianon as a political game and naturalistically stated that “*According to Radičová, the Treaty of Trianon can only be revoked by war.*”<sup>649</sup> The political games we also include L. Kövér’s statement from 2011 that Hungary and the Hungarian minority could intervene militarily when Czechoslovakia unilaterally changed borders in Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros, when Slovakia separated, as the Paris Peace Treaty applied to Czechoslovakia – but they did not.<sup>650</sup>

In the following years, remembrance of Trianon continued at the political level, as well as in everyday life. The Hungarian Act on National Unity was implemented in culture, as well as in schools. In May 2011, on behalf of the Ministry of National Resources, the Institute of Education and Development in Budapest prepared a didactical handbook *The National Unity Day*.<sup>651</sup> This was based on the resolution of the National Assembly of 18 October 2010 on the establishment of the School Day of National Unity, on creating and strengthening relations between Hungarian youth in Hungary and abroad in public education, and on the presentation of Hungarians living outside Hungary. Starting with the school year 2010/2011, the anniversary of the “*conclusion of the Trianon Peace dictate*” must be remembered in public education facilities as a day of National Unity in the form of a school day of remembrance.<sup>652</sup>

Day of remembrance was to “*help deepen relations between Hungarian partner schools and student communities in the Carpathian Basin*”. One of the aims was to gain an “*overview of school study trips to neighbouring countries, experience of co-operation of Hungarian partner schools in the Carpathian Basin, mainly from exchange caMP, and, based on this, to prepare a national program to ensure that all young Hungarians educated in public schools had a chance to get to the Hungarian-inhabited territories of neighbouring states with the contribution of the Hungarian state and to get as many foreign Hungarian students as possible to Hungary, as part of exchange.*” The handbook was 136 pages long, apart from a general introduction which presented the reader with the history of Trianon (legal and historical context). Sections “*Trianon without legends*”, “*Separated territories as part of our nation*” contained a brief description of the Treaty of Trianon and recommendations for commemorative celebrations in schools. The basic message for Hungarian youth (no matter where they live) is that the “*National Unity Day is not a day of mourning, even if it is linked to a sad date! The commemorative celebrations can contribute to the understanding or processing of the trauma of Trianon. It can be really successful*

648 *Sme*, 2. 6. 2010, Schutz, P. Chýba už len Trianon., <http://komentare.sme.sk/c/5404207/chybal-uz-len-trianon.html#ixzz0q9X7JquT>

649 *Webnoviny*, 19. 5. 2010, Dzurinda: Návrh Budapešti nie je európsky.

650 *Hospodárske noviny*, 6. 6. 2011. Každý váš politik má v sebe kúsok Slotu.

651 A nemzeti összetartozás napja. Pedagógiai háttéranya. A Nemzeti Erőforrás Minisztérium megbízásából az Oktatáskutató és Fejlesztő Intézetben, 2011. május. (in authors’ archives)

652 This created the fourth day of remembrance, after 6 October, in memory of the Arad martyrs, 25 February, in memory of the victims of communist dictatorships, 6 April, in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

if it is based on the activities of students – voluntary work, collecting donations, exhibitions, project work, thematic days, even thematic weeks, etc. The essence and aim of everything is to understand that the borders of the Hungarian nation and the Hungarian state are not one and the same.” Launch of the *No Borders!* program provided by the Apáczai Public Foundation was at a briefing in Budapest on 27 May 2010. The event was hosted by singer M. Rúzsa and a two-time Olympic winner, water polo goalkeeper I. Gergely. As part of this program, pupils from schools in Hungary could visit Hungarian-populated areas of neighbouring countries.

The next part of the handbook offered possible scenarios for commemorative celebrations, with recommendations, literary works, poems and prose, expert and political texts, which should be part of the remembrance days. It supported pupils’ initiative, introductory words from professors, pictorial, map and documentation appendices “*the permanent presence of wall maps (depicting Europe before and after Trianon and a map depicting the fragmentation of Hungary) is absolutely necessary*”. The handbook contains links to image and map sources on the Internet, a list of works by prominent politicians and diplomats of Hungarian politics,<sup>653</sup> and the works of authors who worked in Slovakia.<sup>654</sup> It includes recommended poems with patriotic and anti-Trianon topics, as well as scientific literature of the current generation of Hungarian historians addressing Trianon. Among them are excellent historians who often took part in discussions with Slovak historians within the Slovak-Hungarian Commission of Historians (I. Romsics, B. Ablonczy, M. Zeidler).<sup>655</sup> The promotional power of such a handbook, with instructions and scenarios supported by the Hungarian ministries, was a serious systemic step in building the desired form of historical memory. In Hungary, history is an accepted compulsory school-leaving examination in Hungarian secondary schools, and great attention is paid to history in primary schools. In comparison with this, in Slovakia history teachers have to fight for every lesson, although mostly unsuccessfully, and the achievements in increasing the number of lessons are mostly temporary. Historical memory becomes the subject of interest only in the case of a significant stimulus or accidental impulse of government elites. Elements of conceptual creativity of Slovak politics had a rather tragicomic form, e.g. in the form of the concept of “*rational historicism*” or “*healthy historicism*”. It included the introduction of the term “old Slovaks”, the building of the

653 SZEKFÜ, Gy. *Három nemzedék. Egy hanyatló kor története*. Budapest: Élet K., 1920. 332 p.; JÁSZI, O. *A Habsburg-monarchia felbomlása*. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1983. 597 p.; ANDRÁSSY, Gy. *Diplomácia és világháború*. Budapest: Légrády K., 1921, 2, 254 p.; APPONYI A. *Emlékirataim. Ötven év*. Budapest: Pantheon, 1926. 286 p. etc.

654 For example: GROSSCHMID, G. *Kisebbségi sors*. Kosice-Kassa: 1930, 499 p.; JÓCSIK, L. *Idegen igában. Húsz év cseh uralom alatt*. Budapest: Athenaeum, 1940, 230 p.; JANICS, K. *A hontalanság éveit. A szlovákiai magyar kisebbség a második világháború után 1945 – 1948*. Budapest: Hunnia Kiadó, 1989 etc.

655 For example: ABLONCZY, B. *Trianon-legendák*. Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2010. 160 p.; ROMSICS, I. *A trianoni békeszerződés*. Budapest: Osiris, 2001; ROMSICS, I. *A 20. század képes története*. Budapest: Rubicon-Ház Bt., 2008. 504 p.; ZEIDLER, M. *Trianon*. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2003. 953 p.

Jánošík cult and the demonizing the terms national minority and Carpathian Basin, associated with the struggle against opponents of such perceived historical memory, as “*spiritually homeless*” and “*nationally ignorant*”. It was to play an important role in the process of promoting Slovak national identity as the core of Slovak national policy, also in relation to national minorities. This principle was set out by the Government at the beginning of 2008 in the Declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic on the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Slovak Republic and in other commemorations of historical events at which Prime Minister R. Fico “*wanted to show how he values history, legends and symbols of the Slovak nation.*”<sup>656</sup>

We can have different opinions on the issue of myths and legends, the Slovak professional historical literature does not ignore this problem either.<sup>657</sup> However, it becomes problematic when people with a different opinion are labelled as enemies of the state, which is unacceptable, even if they were wrong. The concept, quickly prepared, disappeared equally quickly, abandoned by the inspirer himself. Still, it may be worth mentioning it, as an example of how Slovak politics approaches its own history, compared to the Hungarian systematic Trianon invasion of the historical memory of the Hungarian population and the surrounding countries where Hungarian minorities live. The Hungarian one also describes its opponents as traitors to the nation and enemies of Hungary. However, targeted propaganda significantly affected the media space, and the Trianon obsession, also in Slovakia, periodically (on selected anniversaries) occupies the media in the entire space of interest, seeking respondents among historians, politicians, teachers and students to fulfil the undeclared political order of V. Orbán and his National Unity Day (Trianon and other historical events). It can only be said that this policy is successful in Hungary.<sup>658</sup>

656 “*The Government of the Slovak Republic will systematically develop rational historicism as part of its state policy. It will not allow Slovak history to be depopulated, ... The Government of the Slovak Republic will also lead, especially the young generation, to a deeper relationship with the state, national identity, and healthy patriotism.*” <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/8745/prepis-audiozaznamu-prihovoru-predsedu-vlady-sr-rfca-k-ucastnikom-programu-oslav-pri-prilezitosti-ukoncenia-roka-jozefa-miloslava-hurbana.php>;

657 For example: KREKOVIČ, E. – MANNOVÁ, E. – KREKOVIČOVÁ, E. (eds.). *Mýty naše slovenské*. Bratislava: AEPress, 2005; BYSTRICKÝ, V. – ROGUĽOVÁ, J. (eds.). *Storočie propagandy. Slovensko v osídlach ideológií*. Bratislava: AEPress, 2005; SIMON, A. (ed.). *Mýty a predsudky v dejinách*. Šamorín – Dunajská Streda: Fórum inštitút pre výskum menšín – Liliium Aurum, 2005 or even create myths FERKO, J. *Maďarské (seba)klamy*. Martin: Vydavateľstvo Maticeslovenskej, 2004.

658 A special problem is the content of teaching. On both sides, the textbooks are oversaturated with myths about their own history, which, moreover, either ignore or negatively portray the history of the other nation. (VAJDA, B. *Történelemdidaktika és történelemtankönyv-kutatás (Didaktika dejepisu a výskum učebnic dejepisu) (History Didactics and Research of History Schoolbooks)*. Komárom: Selye János Egyetem, 2020; KRATOCHVÍL, V. Etnikai sztereotípiák a történelemtankönyvek „mi” és „ők” konstrukcióiban. In *Történelemtanítás*, Vol. (46) Új folyam 2, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2011); KRATOCHVÍL, V. K možnostiam oslabovania predsudkov a stereotipov v tvorbe učebnic dejepisu. In *Mýty a predsudky v dejinách*. Dunajská Streda: Liliium Aurum, 2005, p. 39-50. In addition, the interest in the greatest possible influence in the interest of the “state” idea is based on the nationalization and ethnicization of the state space,

If we set ourselves the goal of listing all the actions that took place from 2010 to 2018 as part of the National Unity Day, the scope of this publication would not be enough. The mechanisms presented in the previous text sufficiently characterize the ways and forms by which the sense of unity of Hungary was promoted. Speakers changed, their stylistic exercises and phrases, cities, places of monuments, statues, as there is probably no city and perhaps not even a village in Hungary, which would not have its own anti-Trianon symbol.

In Hungary, Trianon still symbolizes the act of injustice against Hungarians, as well as the humiliation of Hungarians. In the historical memory of a large part of Hungarians, Trianon is a tragic act, a tragedy of the Hungarian nation, committed mainly by anti-Hungarian politicians of France, Great Britain, Romania and Czechoslovakia. Trianon brought positive changes for the nations in the neighbouring states, self-realisation in their own state, but especially the possibilities of cultural, educational and economic upliftment. To this day, this dual perception can provoke tension between the nations living in the Carpathian Basin.<sup>659</sup> The current generation of Hungarians in Slovakia was already born in a new situation and considers this state as natural and has learned to live with it.<sup>660</sup>

Finally, we would like to mention the Hungarian political authority. According to memories of Hungarian Prime Minister P. Teleki, the leader of the Hungarian Revisionist League, he said in 1939 that *“revision is the greatest danger that threatens us, but I cannot do anything about it because I will fall. Our public has gone mad. Everything back! ... We will surrender to revision, it will drag us into the war. The public has lost its head because of propaganda and patriotic phrases.”*<sup>661</sup> The principle mentioned by P. Teleki is very often applied in history, politics and science. The initiators of a movement gradually lose control over their “product”. It can be a chemical reaction or a social phenomenon. In the case of social phenomena, the impact of the induced action is a failure to guide the “reaction”. That is why revolutions “devour” their creators and the children of their revolution. Nationalism and national populism are exactly such difficult-to-direct phenomena if they are seized by the mass, which irritates itself to the escalation of manifestations for its fulfilment. Leadership is then taken over by more revolutionary and aggressive groups, which will lead to positive and thought-provoking ideas to a painful global collapse. If nationalists and those who play with elements of nationalism in Central Europe think this does not concern them, they are wrong.

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national awakening and romanticized interpretation of history based on understanding the history of the 19<sup>th</sup> or first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the history of the state is presented as the history of the majority nation.

659 SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. Národná politika maďarských vlád po roku 1989 (na základe vybraných aspektov)..., p. 90.

660 Simon Attila a trianoni kérdés szlovák és magyar megközelítéséről. interjú Online: <http://parameter.sk/rovat/kulfold/2008/06/04/simon-attila-trianoni-kerdes-szlovak-es-magyar-megkozelitesrol>

661 BARCZA, Gy. Diplomata-émlékeim, 1911 – 1945. I. kötetet. Város: Európa-História, 1994. In KOLLAI, I. Psychológia mierovej zmluvy..., p. 151.

However, political representations have not yet matured for a universal solution that would cure bilateral Trianon traumas in their specific forms, and those who will, may not yet be born, because, as P. Lendvai wrote: *“In the national interest, it is necessary to forget the demons of the past and the fata morganas of the various political regimes and to come to terms with the bitter teachings of history.”*<sup>662</sup>

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662 LENDVAI, P. *Moja premrhaná krajina. Maďarsko na prelome*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2012, p. 169.

## Conclusion

After 1989, there has not been a comprehensive and systematic nationality policy in Slovakia, which would clearly define the relationship to minorities, as well as the Hungarian minority on the basis of civic principles. Nationality policy was often a response to stimuli from the European environment (criticism of Slovak legislation on minorities by European institutions), motivated by the effort to establish itself in the European institutions and especially in the EU. The impact of control and monitoring of nationality policy at the level of the European Union, the Council of Europe or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or decisions of the aforementioned European policy structures was not negligible. The second important impulse was the activity of the Hungarian governments.

In 2006 – 2010, the Slovak government representations (the HZDS, the SNS, Smer) sometimes replaced the program on the nationality issue with provocative acts and statements (about “tanks” heading for Budapest and chauvinistic, offensive statements addressed to Hungarians), thus blurring the thin line between the required loyalty, declared patriotism and realized national populism.

Especially between 2012 – 2016, during the second Fico’s government, the politicians on both sides of the border (Fico and Orbán) managed to achieve a seeming armistice. Fico replaced negotiations with the Hungarian representations at home with agreements and consultations with the Hungarian Prime Minister. The representatives of the Hungarian minority also realized that if they wanted to work on submitting their proposals and comments, the shortest way was via Budapest (this does not mean that there were no other incentives in Slovakia, through parliament, parliamentary proposals, but opposition proposals a did not have a chance to succeed, even if they found support from other opposition parties). In this way, Fico’s second government pushed the Hungarian representations in Slovakia into V. Orbán’s emerging transborder policy and immediately blamed them for disloyalty to Slovakia.

Nationality policy during all three governments of R. Fico did not offer a modern solution to the state nationality policy, but addressed responses to stimuli from across borders and caught up with the deficits of Slovak romantic nationalism through its populist renaissance.

During the period under review, there were serious and visible changes in legislation.<sup>663</sup> (e.g. the Act on the Use of Languages of National Minorities, the Act on

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663 We did not address detailed legal issues in the work, but many matters can be found, for example in: OROSZ, L. *Legislatívne zmeny v postavení obyvateľstva maďarskej národnosti*. In ŠUTAJ, Š. a kol. *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku po roku 1989*. Prešov: Universum, 2008, p. 31-51; OROSZ, L. *The Issues of National Minorities and Ethnic Groups in the Case Law of the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic after Slovakia’s Accession to the European Union (2004 – 2016)*. In ŠUTAJ, Š. – HELDÁKOVÁ, L. – REGINÁČOVÁ, N. *Current Issues of Research on Nationality Policy and Nationality Relations in Slovakia in the 20<sup>th</sup> And the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries*. Prešov: Universum, 2017, p. 110-128.



Citizenship, Financing of Minority Education and Minority Culture), which provoked serious discussions in the society, between Slovaks and national minorities. The nature, structure and competencies of the ministries dealing with minority education and culture changed, including the activities and competencies of the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality and its Committee for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups. There were fundamental changes in the competencies of the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities and the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities and Work with Marginalized Communities. The powers and competencies of central, “county” bodies (VÚC) and local self-government bodies changed too. The changes significantly affected the situation and development in minority education and culture, the possibilities of their financing from domestic and foreign sources. The media and the activities of the radio and television and their minority broadcasts underwent significant changes as well.

The laws were adopted mostly in the interim periods when the HZDS and later Smer-SD with the SNS were not in power, or at the time when Hungarian minority parties (the SMK, Most-Híd) were part of the governing coalitions, even with restrictions arising from the strength of these parties and their potential. They were always extremely sharply criticized by the nationalist and populist policies of leaders (V. Mečiar, J. Slota, R. Fico), who benefited in European politics from the results of the measures taken by these governments towards national minorities. Most of them maintained them, or slightly corrected them and adopted new measures, which complicated Slovakia’s position in the European area and the situation in Slovak-Hungarian relations. The Most-Híd in the government of I. Radičová and Most-Híd in the coalition in the years 2016 – 2020 managed to win only minor concessions and failed to enforce a conceptual change policy in relation to national minorities in Slovakia. It can be said that after evaluating their strengths and possibilities, they did not even really try to do so, not even in topics of fundamental nature (Constitution, the law on national minorities, preparation of the concept of Slovakia’s nationality policy, change of administrative arrangement, change of election laws, the “Beneš Decrees”...). Despite the above, the participation of Hungarian political parties in governments in Slovakia can be considered a stabilizing factor in the political life in Slovakia. In one of the interviews, B. Bugár stated: *“Political representatives of the minority should be in every government. It will lift minority tensions and help address things that help the minority.”*<sup>664</sup> Throughout the post-communist era, the governments, parliaments, and presidents of both republics, no matter what political parties or coalitions were in power, were able to communicate with each other, with bigger or smaller problems. This aspect of mutual relations can be considered an important moment for maintaining standard and tolerant relations between the two countries and proof of their high political culture.

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664 *Dennik N*, 23. 11. 2017, Ak ma neporazí, budem ešte kandidovať (interview M. Toldová with B. Bugár).

The effort to formulate a comprehensive vision of nationality policy and the relationship with minorities appeared only sporadically. L. Bukovszky, as the new government plenipotentiary, announced that he did not want to make empty promises, but would try within the established legal limits “so that the real needs of minorities are supported by an active approach of other state administration bodies, municipalities and cities. ... My wish is to achieve that the Government, in cooperation with the Office of the Plenipotentiary, gradually launches a conceptual solution of the nationality policy of the state, which would result in a single legal document that comprehensively addresses the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.”<sup>665</sup> The idea of fulfilling a project of systematic and conceptual nationality policy, as resulting from the interview, was to be implemented by means of a legal standard – we assume that the law on national minorities, which had long been in the plans of the Hungarian representations. Here, too, it is necessary to point out that the Slovak representations (and the Hungarian ones in Slovakia) did not consider that such a law needs a philosophical, ideological foundation in the form of an idea, a concept of state nationality policy. Such a project would be critical, problematic and dangerous for all representations, as it could reveal long-hidden desires and ambitions. Both assimilative or dominant for Slovak elites, which would fulfil the first sentences of the preamble of the Slovak Constitution about the nation-state and efforts to assimilate minorities. On the other hand, it would be necessary to decipher the signals and elements linking the Hungarian minority policy with the Hungarian political nation, with autonomist (self-governing) or federalist motives. It was difficult to present a vision of modern Slovakia as a multinational state of Slovaks, Hungarians, Ruthenians, the Roma and other citizens and the opportunity to build Slovakia as a civic state with plentiful administrative self-governing elements to a Slovak society massaged by stereotypes about enemies from the south and transnational visions of Orbán policy. As a result, although the words about nationality policy were often heard in the Slovak political environment, they were usually reduced, as in the case of Bukovszky, to the law on minorities as the supreme goal of efforts of minority representations. In political reality, they were reduced to small “wars and battles” about signboards of municipalities and streets, railway stations, school classes, fines, forms in the minority language, communication in offices, the police, firefighters and doctors, resolved by life itself.

With regard to the declining support for minority political parties, it is necessary to look for another mechanism to ensure the participation of national minorities in the NC SR. The strengthening of the civic principle, other preferences of values such as ethnicity, determine the fact that part of the population belonging to Hungarian nationality (minorities) chooses their representatives on other than ethnic basis. Part of the “Slovak” (‘Slovakness’ is not essential for them) political parties seek to create space for the application of candidates belonging to national minorities, as reflect-

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665 *Aktuálne*, 20. 4. 2016, Splnomocnenec pre národnostnú otázku: Menšiny nie sú migranti, <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/slovensko/spolocnost/splnomocnenec-narodnostne-mensiny-prislusnici-narodnostnych-mensin-nie-su-migranti.html>

ed in their organizational structures, or they only purposefully seek out personalities belonging to the national minority, who conform with ideas and programme priorities of the political party. Such people are then offered places on their lists of candidates and also within the structures of political parties. It is not a question of whether this process is appropriate or inappropriate, favourable or unfavourable. It is a part of today's trends in politics and participation of Slovak citizens in political and public life. Within the framework of future reforms of the political and electoral system, or reforms of the activities of the legislative body of the SR, it will be necessary to take into account this aspect, this unequivocal trend in political life and the creation of political representations. It should ensure that the participation of persons belonging to national minorities does not depend solely on the willingness, objectives and priorities of political parties, but creates a functioning mechanism to ensure the representation of national minorities in legislative structures and the opportunity to present the needs and problems of minority ethnic communities. During the discussion of the third report on the implementation of the Framework Convention, the Advisory Committee stated in May 2010 that "*during the period under review, there was a continuing decline in the number of persons belonging to national minorities, which was already found in the 2001 census. This may have a negative impact on the exercise of certain rights of national minorities, e.g. the rights concerning the use of minority languages by persons belonging to national minorities, in particular those which are subject to the number of persons belonging to a national minority in the areas traditionally inhabited by national minorities. As one of the decisive factors seems to be the unfavourable economic situation, the Advisory Committee considers it important that the Slovak authorities regularly analyse this situation.*"<sup>666</sup> However, all fundamental measures that the Slovak Republic needs to implement will not do without a consensually adopted and accepted concept of nationality policy, regardless of the composition of governments and government coalitions.

The historical context of the researched issue also suggests that it is necessary to find a suitable model of the coexistence of different ethnic groups in the state. The Kingdom of Hungary disintegrated due to its insensitive policy, inability to fundamentally modernize and the rigidity of the political elite. It also dissolved because the ruling elites of the Kingdom of Hungary (and in this case, we can certainly understand the Hungarian elites) failed to create sufficient conditions for non-Hungarian nations and prevented their free development to such an extent that at the time when the right conditions arose, these the nations did not hesitate and dropped their loyalty to the state, which ceased to be their homeland and only demanded loyalty and obedience from them. They were looking for an alternative, to live free in another state, which would provide them with opportunities for free cultural and democratic development in accordance with the modern trends in society development. It was primarily ethnic kinship, but also the principles of freedom and democracy, which, unlike in

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666 Third Opinion on the Slovak Republic, adopted on 27 May 2010. Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Strasbourg, 27 May 2010, ACFC/OP/III(2010)004, Annex 1, p. 5.

the Kingdom of Hungary, provided Slovaks with the opportunity to make up for the missed years in ethnic-emancipatory development and construction of Slovak national identity into a modern Central European nation.

The model was repeated in the Czechoslovak Republic, which, despite the declaration of building a nation state, was constructed by fulfilling the fictitious model of the Czechoslovak nation. It absorbed territories with the ethnic predominance of German and Hungarian populations and subjected the national emancipation of Slovaks to the international status of a declared nationally homogeneous state. The principle of autonomy established for the Slovaks from the outset was unacceptable for the ruling Czech political elites supported by pro-Czechoslovak groups of Slovak politicians. Together with the minority dissatisfied revisionism and the internationally presented resistance of some European politicians against the Versailles system, it was the beginning of the dissolution of the Czechoslovak state. The conflict between Slovak patriotism and the Czechoslovak homeland, loyalty to the nation and loyalty to the state, was the cause of further changes in the arrangement of states in this territory. Before World War II, it became clear that the Czechoslovak Republic was a state of the Czechs and that Slovaks were required to be loyal to this state, but they were not offered patriotism in the true sense of the word, only patriotism as an added value of loyalty.

Slovakia is in a similar situation nowadays. The state identity of Slovakia is currently a conglomerate of the ethnic identity of the Slovak nation and the ethnic identities of its minorities. Another explanation for this fact would be misleading, regardless of the fact that the state sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Slovak Republic based on national-state interests and the principle of the “nation” state is based on the Versailles system built after the world wars. It belongs to all its inhabitants and it is up to its representations to choose the path of building relations between citizens of different ethnicities. The usual way of dominating the state for the majority and demanding loyalty from others, or the way of building an equal relationship for all citizens to whom the state belongs.

The population of Hungarian nationality in Slovakia has, for the whole period since its separation from the Hungarian nation, mostly maintained an awareness of belonging to the Hungarian nation, they feel to be its cultural part, and therefore we can talk about its Hungarian national identity. In his book, the then Chairman of the SMK, B. Bugár, tried to characterize the position of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia in this vein. He wrote: *“It would be high time to accept that the awareness of the national identity of Hungarians living in Slovakia is extremely intense. History has refuted the erroneous belief that ordered the Hungarians in Slovakia: Since you no longer belong to Hungary, you no longer belong to the Hungarian nation. It will soon be nine decades since the Hungarians found themselves in this state, but their connection with the nation – despite realizing the change of nationality – has been preserved. Anyone can say or write anything, in addition to their Slovak nationality, affiliation to the Slovak Republic, to Slovak society, they fully retain the Hungarian national identity. ... We could say that civic identity did not erode their national identity. On the contrary, both identities peacefully tolerate each other within them. Most*

*Hungarians in Slovakia have acknowledged that, as a result of historical events, Hungarians living in present-day Slovakia have changed into members of a minority nation from day to day. Neither they nor their political party want to change anything about that anymore...*<sup>667</sup>

If the Hungarian national policy is based on clearly defined principles grounded in history, the basic idea, definition of goals, the way it wants to achieve the goal and institutional enshrinement, the Slovak nationality policy is different. It did not have a clear goal, it was not clearly ideologically defined, it did not have its own structure or an institutional expression and, in the end, it often only reacted confusedly to Hungarian conceptual national and nationalist policies. Slovak populist and intuitive, in every possible way disguised, but finally, clear nationalism, could not compete with the Hungarian state. V. Orbán was able to use the Slovak elections, the Slovak scandals so that his nationalist program seemed like a defence of the persecuted Hungarian minority abroad (the statements and actions of the representatives of the Slovak governments gave him an abundance of incentives and arguments). Slovak responses to Hungarian incentives were not conceptual, unconsidered and, importantly, Slovak political representations failed to formulate a clear program in which the inhabitants of Hungarian nationality (and not only Hungarian) would get their real place in the Slovak idea of the state as equal and full citizens. We encounter this absence of programme of Slovak nationality policy in all monitored areas of Slovak nationality policy (in the political system, administrative organization, legal status, in individual segments of the legal status of minorities...).

Successful policy must draw on a civic rather than a national principle, which, although traditional in the region and attractive to nationalists, is socially inefficient and conflictual. Instead of building a modern European civic state, Slovak political representations adopted the national games of Budapest as a model of “national” policy. First, following their example and at their initiative, they revised and repaired their policy towards compatriots abroad, and then, at the incentive from Budapest, they corrected their notions of Slovak citizenship. They entered the ring, where different weight categories with different equipment stood against each other, although, in the end, Slovakia stands on the side of the defeated together with Hungary.

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667 BUGÁR, B. *Žijem v takej krajine... O Maďaroch, Slovákoch, premárnených príležitostiach a vynárajúcich sa možnostiach*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2004, p. 25-26.

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# List of Abbreviations

Action Plan	– Action Plan for the Protection of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and Ethnic Groups for 2016 – 2020
ANO	– Aliancia nového občana (Alliance of the New Citizen)
ASV	– Agrárna strana vidieka (Agrarian and Countryside Party)
Basic Agreement	– Agreement on Good Neighbourly Relations and Friendly Cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Hungary of 1995
BGA	– Fond Gábora Bethlena ( <i>Bethlen Gábor Alap</i> ) (Bethlen Gábor Fund)
CAS	– (Czech Academy of Sciences)
CE	– Council of Europe
Council of the Government	– Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality
CSR	– Czechoslovak Republic
European Charter	– The <i>European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages</i>
EC	– European Commission
EP	– European Parliament
EPP	– European People's Party
EU	– European Union
FIDESZ	– Maďarský občiansky zväz/ Magyar Polgári Szövetség (Hungarian Civic Alliance)
Framework Convention	– Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
Fund	– Fund for the Support of the Culture of National Minorities
GO SR	– Government Office of the Slovak Republic
HR	– Hungarian Republic
HUF	– Hungarian Forint
HZD	– Hnutie za demokraciu (Movement for Democracy)
HZDS	– Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko – Ľudová strana (Movement for Democratic Slovakia – People's Party)
KMKF	– Kárpát-medencei Magyar Képviselek Fóruma (Fórum maďarských poslancov Karpatskej kotliny) (Forum of Hungarian Deputies of the Carpathian Basin)
KDH	– Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie (Christian Democratic Movement)
KDS	– Konzervatívni demokrati Slovenska (Conservative Democrats of Slovakia)
KSS	– Komunistická strana Slovenska (Communist Party of Slovakia)
LIBE	– Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
LB	– Ľavicový blok (Left Bloc)
ESNS	– Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko (People's Party – Our Slovakia)
MÁÉRT	– Magyar Állandó Értekezlet (Stála maďarská konferencia – maďarsko-maďarský summit) (Permanent Hungarian Conference – Hungarian-Hungarian Summit)
MC SR	– Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic
MEP	– Member of European Parliament
ME SR	– Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic

MFA	– Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MI SR	– Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
MKDA	– Maďarská kresťansko-demokratická aliancia/ Magyar Kereszténydemokrata Szövetség (Hungarian Christian Democratic Alliance)
MKDH	– Maďarské kresťansko-demokratické hnutie / Magyar Kereszténydemokrata
MNI	– Maďarská nezávislá iniciatíva/ Független Magyar Kezdeményezés (Hungarian Independent Initiative) Mozgalom (Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement)
MP	– Member of Parliament
MSHC	– Mixed Slovak-Hungarian Committee for Minorities
MSZP	– Maďarská socialistická strana Maďarská socialistická strana/ Magyar Szocialista Párt (Hungarian Socialist Party in Slovakia)
MTA	– Hungarian Academy of Sciences
National Strategy	– National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Slovak Republic
NATO	– North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NC SR	– National Council of the Slovak Republic
NKA	– Národný kultúrny fond ( <i>Nemzeti Kulturális Alap</i> ) (National Culture Fund)
NOVA	– Nová väčšina (New Majority)
NSK	– Výskumný ústav národnej stratégie Jenő Szász (Szász Jenő Nemzetstratégiai Kutatóintézet) (Jenő Szász Research Institute of National Strategy)
OKS	– Občianska konzervatívna strana (Civic Conservative Party)
OLaNO	– Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti (Ordinary People and Independent Personalities)
OSCE	– Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PACE	– Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PS	– Progresívne Slovensko (Progressive Slovakia)
PSNS	– Pravá Slovenská národná strana (True Slovak National Party)
PHC	– Population and Housing Census
RHS	– Okrúhly stôl Maďarov na Slovensku/ Szlovákiai Magyarok Kerekasztala (The Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia)
RTVS	– Rozhlas a televízia Slovenska (Radio and Television of Slovakia)
SaS	– Sloboda a solidarita (Freedom and Solidarity)
SD	– sociálna demokracia (Social Democracy)
SDKÚ-DS	– Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia – Demokratická strana (Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party)
SF	– Slobodné fórum (Free Forum)
SMK (SMK-MKP)	– Strana maďarskej koalície/Magyar Koalíció Pártja (Hungarian Coalition Party)
SMK	– Strana maďarskej komunity/Magyar Közösség Pártja (Hungarian Community Party)
SNM	– Slovenské národné múzeum (Slovak National Museum)
SNM GO SR	– Section for National Minorities of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic
SNR	– Slovenská národná rada (Slovak National Council)
SNS	– Slovenská národná strana (Slovak National Party)

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SNSLP	– Slovenské národné stredisko pre ľudské práva (Slovak National Centre for Human Rights)
SR	– Slovak Republic
SRo	– Slovenský rozhlas (Slovak Radio)
STV	– Slovenská televízia (Slovak Television)
SZDSZ	– Zväz slobodných demokratov/ Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége (Association of Free Democrats)
SZS	– Strana zelených Slovenska (Slovak Green Party)
ŠtB	– Štátna bezpečnosť (State Security)
TA SR	– Tlačová agentúra Slovenskej republiky (News Agency of the Slovak Republic)
UN	– United Nations Organisation
VNMES	– Výbor pre národnostné menšiny a etnické skupiny (Committee on National Minorities and Ethnic Groups)
VÚC	– vyššie územné celky, samosprávne kraje (Higher Territorial Units, self-governing regions)
ZSNS	– Zjednotená Slovenská národná strana (United Slovak National Party)





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**Nationality Policy in Slovakia 2004 – 2018  
(Selected Aspects of Hungarian Minority Policy)**

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The publication was released within of frame of solving the project APVV-15-0745  
“*Trends in the Development of Ethnic Relations in Slovakia (Comparative Research  
on Nationality Issue between 2004 – 2020)*” (TESS2)

Translate: Mgr. Jana Petrovová

Type: Ing. Stanislav Kurimai

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Institute of Social Sciences 2020

For the Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences of the Slovak Academy of  
Sciences, Institute of Social Sciences published by UNIVERSUM-EU, s. r. o.,  
Javorinská 26, 080 01 Prešov (www.universum-eu.sk)

Prešov 2020

ISBN 978-80-89946-18-1

ISBN 978-80-89946-18-1



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