

**Public Hearing organized by MEP László TŐKÉS with  
Hungarian Autonomy Council of the Carpathian Basin  
EP, A3G2, 11 November 2008, 10:00-12:00  
The Hungarian issue of the Carpathian Basin - a European issue**

The **Hungarians** living outside the borders of today's Hungary were brought under the authority of other countries as a consequence of the peace treaties that were signed between the two world wars. Their number in **Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, the Ukraine, Croatia and Slovenia** is today close to three million.

Under the communism regime they could not fight for their linguistic, cultural and denominational rights as this was considered an activity directed against the regime in most communist countries. Their educational, language-related and cultural rights were restricted, which greatly reinforced the process of assimilation and immigration. They never used violence in their fight for their rights; instead they always maintained their demands in the framework of parliamentary democracy and the rule of law.

After the fall of communism, in the beginning of the 90's the political advocacy organizations of Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin saw their survival through the cultural (personal) and territorial autonomy.

All Hungarian communities expressed their internal autonomy demands - demands that were based on self-government, without border change - in the first half of the nineties. The functioning forms of autonomy in the European Union served as models in shaping their autonomy concepts and demands. Their common characteristics are as follows:

**a.** in the case of **cultural autonomy**, the community sets up and directs a group of institutions through democratically elected representatives by the members of the community for the protection of their linguistic, educational and cultural self-government, with legal authorisation and with budget. This system of institutions is vital for the survival of the community. The institutions are provided with public authorisation in the field of mother tongue education, general education and information, use of language, fields that directly touch upon the shaping of collective identity.

**b.** in the case of **territorial autonomy**, the above mentioned legal competencies are further completed with administrative ones, that are the administrative and decision-making powers of the locally elected authorities. Thus, those administrative regions where these communities are in a majority gain special legal status.

In the Carpathian Basin we can not find any association or organization of the Hungarian community that raised its voice to change the current country borders or to deny the sovereignty of these countries.

However, the governments of Slovakia, the Ukraine and Romania consider the issue of autonomy a taboo. Croatia improperly manages the cultural self-government demand of minorities with the rectification of the minority law, while Serbia, in the aftermath of the South-Slavic crisis and facing the challenges of democracy, approaches and manages the demands of Hungarians with an attitude of suspicion and rejection.

In the recent years the aggression directed against the Hungarian community has seriously increased, caused very often by extreme nationalistic voices. Hungarians are often beaten because they speak Hungarian on the street. The governments of Slovakia, Romania and Serbia can not or are not willing to efficiently fight against this phenomenon.

The denial of the democratically expressed demands in full respect of the rule of law of the Hungarian communities, the political practice directed at their assimilation and the discriminative change of ethnic proportions in the region, the reoccurring anti-Hungarian attitudes and violence together turn the issue of the Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin into an issue of regional security and stability. As several international documents indicate, the rights of national communities can not be regarded as exclusively national affairs. Therefore the proper solving of the Hungarian issue in the Carpathian Basin is not the internal affair of the respective countries, but rather the issue of the entire Europe, of the European Union.

The Hungarian national communities see security and long term stability possible only through the complementary application of the different forms of autonomy in the region. Solving the Hungarian issue of the Carpathian Basin based on such positive models and thus guaranteeing the stability in the region is therefore the common interest of Hungarians, of the countries they live in and, last but not least, of the European Union.