



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MINORITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Delegation of the Republic of Serbia

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DATA ON THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MINORITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

MINORITY RIGHTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Minority rights that are guaranteed by internal regulations

The legal system of the Republic of Serbia guarantees a wide spectrum of minority rights. It is one of the most comprehensive systems for minority rights protection in Europe.

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia guarantees to all citizens freedom to express their nationality and culture, to be educated in their mother tongue as well as the freedom to use their language and script. A number of laws regulate the exercise of minority rights in certain areas of social life. ***The Law on the Protection of Rights and Liberties of National Minorities*** ensures cultural autonomy whose main bearers are the National Councils of national minorities which are advisory bodies to state authorities and they represent a national minority in the fields of culture, education, information and official use of the language and script. ***The laws of the Republic of Serbia regarding education*** ensure conducting all teaching activities in minority languages at all levels of education. ***The Law of the Republic of Serbia on Textbooks and Other Teaching Aids*** stipulates that the textbooks used in the education process shall also be printed in the languages of national minorities. ***The Law on the Official Use of Language and Script of the Republic of Serbia*** states that the official use of a minority language and script implies not only inscribing the name of a local self-governed unit, inhabited places and other toponyms in a minority language, but also conducting all court and administrative proceedings in the languages of national minorities that are in official use. ***The Law on the Protection of Rights and Liberties of National Minorities*** states that a minority language shall be introduced into official use in a local self-governed unit in which members of a national minority constitute more than 15% of the overall population. ***The Law on Broadcasting of the Republic of Serbia*** states that the agencies providing broadcasting services are obliged to ensure to the members of national minorities a possibility to have certain programs in their mother language and script. ***The Law on Amendments of the Law on the Election of the Members of the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia*** abolished the 5% electoral threshold for the political parties of national minorities, within proportional elections for the mandate distribution in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

International legal framework of national minority rights

The international legal framework of the rights of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia include the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities and bilateral agreements on the protection of national minorities that were signed with the Republic of Hungary, Romania, Croatia and Macedonia. Serbia implements the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities which was confirmed in the monitoring process conducted by the competent bodies of the Council of Europe. After their visit to Serbia (and Montenegro)¹, the Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe (provided for by Article 26 paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe that reviews state reports on the implementation of the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities), adopted at its XVIII session on 27 November 2003, the Opinion on the Framework Convention Implementation in Serbia (and Montenegro) and in its concluding remarks notes with pleasure that *“although constitutional structures have undergone radical changes, **the authorities of Serbia (and Montenegro) have taken decisive measures in respect of the protection of national minorities in areas such as education and the right to use one’s own mother tongue.**”* Section 177 of the Opinion of the Advisory Committee notes that regarding efforts made towards the protection of languages and culture of national minorities, the situation varies between different regions in the country, and ***at the same time the Opinion points out Vojvodina as a positive example, stressing that “numerous initiatives have been launched in that region”.*** The Resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe dated 17 November 2004 that contains recommendations to Serbia (and Montenegro) for the implementation of the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe points out that numerous positive initiatives regarding minority languages and culture have been launched in Vojvodina.

A separate international legal framework of rights of the members of the Hungarian national minority, that allows for the Republic of Hungary to become involved in the protection of the Hungarian national minority, is the ***Agreement between Serbia (and Montenegro) and the Republic of Hungary on the Protection of the Hungarian National Minority living in Serbia (and Montenegro) and of the Serbian National Minority living in the Republic of Hungary.*** The Agreement was signed on 21 October 2003 and it was ratified in the Parliament of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro on 15 June 2004. After the Agreement entered into force towards the end of 2004, the Inter-governmental Joint Committee in charge of monitoring the implementation of

¹ State Union - Serbia and Montenegro, February 2003 - June 2006

provisions of the Agreement, was established. The Joint Committee met in Budapest towards the end of 2004 while Joint recommendations to the Governments of the Contracting Parties on the implementation of the Agreement, were signed in Subotica on 11 February 2005. Another such meeting of the Joint Committee is expected to take place by the end of this year.

BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MINORITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

According to the population census from 2002, the Republic of Serbia, excluding the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, has 7, 498 001 inhabitants. There are more than twenty national minorities living in the Republic of Serbia. There are 293, 299 members of the Hungarian national minority, which makes this minority the largest one in the Republic of Serbia. The members of the Hungarian national minority constitute 3.9% of the overall population of the Republic of Serbia, excluding the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija. The majority of the Hungarian national minority lives in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina – 290,207 people or 98.9% of the overall number of Hungarians who live in the Republic of Serbia, which makes 14.3% of the overall population of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

THE EXERCISE OF RIGHTS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MINORITY IN PRACTICE

The exercise of rights of the members of the Hungarian national minority in the area of education

On the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, the students of the Hungarian national minority attend school in their mother tongue in 45 local self-governed units in 274 primary schools (I – VIII grade), out of 325 primary schools that exist on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The law allows teaching in mother tongue for less than 15 students that belong to a certain national minority, so in accordance with this in 29 first grade primary school classes the teaching in Hungarian is conducted for less than 15 students per class, while in 5 schools teaching in Hungarian is conducted for less than 10 students per class. The teaching activities in Hungarian are conducted for students of other nationalities too, so the total number of students attending school in Hungarian **exceeds the number of students of Hungarian nationality**. There are five primary schools for students with special needs that teach both in Serbian and Hungarian. There are 8 schools for basic music education in 8 municipalities that have teaching activities both in Serbian and Hungarian.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED IN THE HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE AND THE STUDENTS BELONGING TO THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MINORITY

	Primary school	Secondary school
Total number of schools	325	117
Schools with teaching activities in the Hungarian language	274	34
The number of students belonging to the Hungarian national minority	17,687	9,237
The number of students belonging to the Hungarian national minority attending school in the Hungarian language	13,443	6,556
Total number of students attending school in the Hungarian language	18,286	6,741
Schools for children with special needs	5	-
Music schools	8	-

Regarding college education, instruction in the Hungarian language is given at the Technical College in Subotica and at colleges for pre-school teachers in Novi Sad and Subotica. Regarding higher education, the instruction in the Hungarian language is given at the Department for the Hungarian Language and Literature at the School of Arts in Novi Sad and in Belgrade and partially at the Arts Academy in Novi Sad (Department for Acting in the Hungarian Language), at the Department for Teaching of the Sombor Teachers College in Subotica, as well as at the Faculty of Economy and the Faculty of Civil Engineering in Subotica.

The official use of the language and script

The Hungarian language, in parallel with the Serbian language, either independently or together with other languages of other national minorities is in official use in 30 local self-governed units in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The percentage of the members of the Hungarian national minority in the total number of inhabitants of a local self-governed unit in which the Hungarian language has been introduced into official use, ranges from 2.25% in the municipality of Bela Crkva, to 86.52% in the municipality of Kanjiža.

THE OFFICIAL USE OF THE HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE

Municipality	Share of national minority members in the total population
1. Bačka Topola	Hungarians: 58.94% Ruthenians: 0.76% Slovaks: 0.52%
2. Mali Idoš	Hungarians: 55.92%
3. Subotica	Hungarians: 38.46% Croats: 11.24%
4. Žitište	Hungarians: 19.96% Romanians: 9%
5. Nova Crnja	Hungarians: 18.64%
6. Novi Bečej	Hungarians: 19.23%
7. Ada	Hungarians: 76.64%
8. Kanjiža	Hungarians: 86.52%
9. Novi Kneževac	Hungarians: 29.78%
10. Senta	Hungarians: 80.51%
11. Čoka	Hungarians: 51.57%
12. Bečej	Hungarians: 48.85%
13. Srbobran	Hungarians: 21.95%
14. Temerin	Hungarians: 29.50%
15. Kovačica	Slovaks: 41.07% Hungarians: 10.52% Romanians: 6.99%
16 Bač	Slovaks: 19.75% Hungarians: 6.09%
17. Bela Crkva	Hungarians: 2.25% Romanians: 5.4% Czechs: 3.99%
18. Vrbas	Hungarians: 6.29% Ruthenians: 8.21%
19. Vršac	Romanian: 10.87% Hungarians: 4.18%
20. Zrenjanin	Hungarians: 10.76% Romanians: 1.9% Slovaks: 1.81%
21. Kikinda	Hungarians: 12.85%
22. Kovin	Hungarians: 9.26% Romanians: 3.71%
23. Kula	Ruthenians: 11.16% Hungarians: 8.44%
24. Novi Sad (city)	Hungarians: 5.23% Slovaks: 2.41% Ruthenians: 0.67%
25. Odžaci	Hungarians: 4.41% Slovaks: 2.81%
26. Pančevo	Hungarians: 3.17%

	Slovaks: 1.24%
27. Plandište	Hungarians: 12.10% Slovaks: 5.41% Romanians: 7.21%
28. Sečanj	Hungarians: 12.63% Romanians: 3.72%
29. Sombor	Hungarians: 12.73%
30. Titel	Hungarians: 5.29%

In local self-governed units in which the Hungarian language is in official use, the court and administrative proceedings are conducted in the Hungarian language in those cases when clients are members of the Hungarian national minority. Moreover, in local self-governed units in which the Hungarian language is in official use, traditional names of places and other toponyms that are not the same as the official ones and which were defined by the National Council of the Hungarian national minority in Serbia, based on the decision of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, are displayed.

Information in the Hungarian language

The information dissemination in the Hungarian language is provided through printed and electronic media outlets. The daily newspaper “Magyar So” is published in the Hungarian language and its founder is the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, which has transferred its founder’s rights to the National Council of the Hungarian national minority. Apart from the daily “Magyar So”, there is also the young people’s weekly “Kepeš Ifjušag” and children’s magazine “Jo pajtaš” and “Mezeš Kalač”. There is also a periodical magazine for culture, literature and arts “Hid”, a magazine that deals in scientific and social issues “Letink”, as well as the arts and review magazine “Uj simpozion”. In addition, there are also many journals that are published in Hungarian of municipal and inter-municipal significance. In the sphere of electronic media, Radio Novi Sad broadcasts round-the-clock program in Hungarian and 22 local radio stations in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina broadcast their programs in the Hungarian language. The Radio and Television of Novi Sad broadcasts each year 865 television shows in the Hungarian language with the total duration of 30,125 minutes.

Exercise of the rights of the members of the Hungarian minority in the area of culture

Professional theatres in Novi Sad and in Subotica contribute to the promotion and development of the culture of the Hungarian national minority living in the Republic of Serbia and their theatre plays are in Hungarian. Theatre plays are also prepared and performed by amateur theatres that are active in 16

municipalities in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The exhibits and documents of the material heritage that relate to culture, identity and spirituality of the Hungarians in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, are kept in special collections of the Museum of Vojvodina in Novi Sad, at the Provincial Historical Records Office and city museums and records offices in Bečej, Kikinda, Pančevo, Senta, Sombor, Subotica and Zrenjanin. The members of the Hungarian national minority preserve and promote their culture and customs by participating in over 80 cultural and arts associations which have successful folk-dancing groups. The publishing company “Forum” is in charge of publishing activities in the Hungarian language, and during the 40 years of its existence, it has published over 2000 books in Hungarian.

Libraries in 27 municipalities throughout Vojvodina have library holdings of over half a million books in the Hungarian language, which is 15.65% of the total number of books in the library network of Vojvodina.

Participation in the political life, administration and public services

In the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia there are four representatives of the Hungarian national minority political parties. In the Council for European Integrations of the Republic of Serbia one seat went to Mr. Laslo Joža who is the Chairman of the National Council of the Hungarian national minority in Serbia and Montenegro. The participation of the members of the Hungarian national minority in administration and public services on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina is higher and it more or less corresponds to the participation of Hungarians in the total population.

PARTICIPATION OF THE MEMBERS OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MINORITY IN ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Category		Members of the Hungarian national minority	
Members of the National Parliament of the Republic of Serbia		2 (0.8%)	
Judges in courts on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina	Municipal courts	31	8.8%
	District courts	4	
	Commercial courts	4	
Public prosecutors and Deputy Public Prosecutors in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina		7 (5.43%)	
Employees in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina		453 (5.81%)	
Employees in the district units of the Revenue Administration of the Ministry of Finance on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina		123 (7.31%)	
Employees in the district units of the Land Surveillance Institute on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina		53 (9.62%)	

Members of the Provincial Parliament	24 (20%)
Members of the Council of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina	5 (23.8%)
Employees in municipal and city administration bodies on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (including officials)	701 (14.99%)

The members of the Hungarian national minority were the first among all other national minorities in Serbia to elect their National Council at the electronic assembly of the Hungarian national minority that was held on 21 September 2002 in Subotica, at which 587 electors were present. According to the provisions of the Law on Protection of Rights and Liberties of National Minorities, the National Council represents the national minority in the area of education, culture, information and official use of language and script.

INCIDENTS AGAINST THE MEMBERS OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MINORITY

Most of incidents against the members of the Hungarian national minority between 2003 and 2007 occurred in 2004.

INCIDENTS AGAINST MEMBERS OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MINORITY, 2003 – 2007

Type of incident	2003	2004	2005 January- August	2006	2007 January- April
1. Physical assault	0	8	0	4	4
2. Fights	2	8	2	1	1
3. Damaging Catholic religious sites	1	6	2	6	6
4. Damaging and desecrating Catholic tombstones	11	17	6	7	7
5. Graffiti-writing, drawing of symbols and pamphlet distribution	3	25	3	4	4

Measures, investigations and actions taken in 2003

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia has solved 11 incidents out of total of 17 incidents that occurred during 2003. In total 11 criminal charges were laid and one petty offence charge. Four persons of Serbian nationality and one person of Hungarian nationality were involved in physical fights that occurred during 2003. In 2003 there was one case of damaging a Catholic religious site and this was done jointly by two persons of Serbian nationality and one person of Hungarian nationality. In 6 out of 8 solved cases of damaging and desecrating Catholic tombstones and monuments, the perpetrators were of Serbian nationality, in one case perpetrators were Serbs and Hungarians acting together while in one case the perpetrator was a person of Hungarian nationality.

Measures taken in 2004

In respect of the above-stated incidents committed against members of the Hungarian national minority, in 2004 criminal charges were brought for the total of 28 criminal acts committed and petty offence charges were brought for 20 offences against public peace and order. With the exception of members of other national minorities, among the perpetrators of criminal acts there were 11 Serb and 3 Hungarians, while among the perpetrators of petty offences there were 39 Serbs and 21 Hungarians. These incidents caused Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica to hold a meeting in September 2004 with representative of National Councils of the Hungarian national minority in the Republic of Serbia and he visited the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The Committees for Security and Inter-ethnic Relations of the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia held a joint meeting in the presence of political leaders of the Hungarian national minority on 10 September 2004 in Subotica. On 17 September the Government of the Republic of Serbia passed a Decree on establishing a Council of the Republic of Serbia for national minorities that should ensure continuous communication between the representatives of line ministries of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the representatives of National Councils of the national minorities. At the meetings that the officials of the Republic of Serbia and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro had with the representatives of the Hungarian national minority and competent state and provincial institutions, it has been agreed to work together to ease tension and take decisive measures and urgent actions in relation to the incidents with inter-ethnic characteristics. The described political, investigative and court measures yielded such good results, so that in the first month of 2005 (for the period January – August) the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia reported no physical assaults against members of the Hungarian minority.

Measures taken in 2005

With reference to the incidents committed against members of the Hungarian national minority in the first eight months of 2005, criminal charges were laid for 4 criminal acts and petty offence charges were brought for two offences against public order and peace against 8 persons, namely 4 persons of Hungarian, 3 persons of Serbian and 1 person of Muslim nationality.

REFUGEES IN THE TERRITORY OF THE AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF VOJVODINA

The refugees were settling in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina during the war that was waged on the territory of the former Yugoslavia until 1996, mainly in two huge spontaneous refugee waves – the first one in 1991 and the second one in 1995, from the Republic of Croatia and from Bosnia and Herzegovina. A total number of 186,463 refugees settled in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina which accounts for 49.1% of the total number of refugees in the Republic of Serbia (379,135). Out of the 186,463 refugees settled in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, 172,726 are of Serbian nationality while 13,737 are persons belonging to other nationalities. The refugees settled in all municipalities in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, and the main reason why they chose Vojvodina is because these refugees are predominantly agrarian population and many of them had relatives on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (after the World War II many people moved from the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and resettled in Vojvodina). The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina is economically the most developed part of the Republic of Serbia, geographically it is closest to the Republic of Croatia and to Bosnia and Herzegovina, these elements being obvious additional reasons why refugees chose to settle in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The settling of refugees in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina had no influence whatsoever on the exercise of minority rights of the members of the Hungarian national minority because in the legal system of the Republic of Serbia there are no minority rights that depend on the number of minority members in the total number of the population, except for the segment of the official use of language and script that is very broadly applied in the Republic of Serbia. Moreover, the influx of refugees to local self-governed units with Hungarian majority was much lower than the inflow of refugees to those local self-governed units where Serbs are the majority population.

REFUGEES IN THE MUNICIPALITIES WITH HUNGARIAN MAJORITY

Municipality	Number of refugees	Share of refugees in percentages
1. Bačka Topola	2,775	7.26%
2. Mali Idoš	713	5.28%
3. Ada	309	1.63%
4. Subotica	9,534	6.42%
5. Kanjiža	288	1.05%
6. Senta	249	0.97%
7. Bečej	2,489	6.07%

REFUGEES IN THE MUNICIPALITIES WITH SERBIAN MAJORITY

Municipality	Number of refugees	Share of refugees in percentages
1. Apatin	4,363	13.3%
2. Sombor	11,912	12.25%
3. Novi Sad (city)	37,599	12.56%
4. Sremski Karlovci	1,675	18.95%
5. Indija	10,444	21.05%
6. Irig	1,870	15.17%
7. Ruma	9,859	16.43%
8. Stara Pazova	12,582	18.62%