

HUNGARIANS IN SLOVAKIA



Total population amount	5,379,455 (2001)
Official languages	Slovak
Minorities	Hungarians (9,7%), Roma (1,7%), Czechs (0,8%), Ruthenians (0,4%), Ukrainians (0,2%)
Migrants	No substantial group

GENERAL INFORMATION: HUNGARIANS IN SLOVAKIA

HUNGARIANS IN SLOVAKIA - LOCATION AND INHABITANTS:

9,7% of Slovakia's inhabitants are Hungarians. The vast majority of them live along the whole Southern borderline of the country neighboring with Hungary. Slovakia also has a considerable Roma population – officially 1,7%, but experts say the actual number can amount to 5%. Roma live especially in the Eastern part of the country, as well as Ruthenians and Ukrainians.

HISTORY:

The territory of today's Slovakia had been a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire up to 1918 when Czechoslovakia was formed. The new division of the Empire was formally approved by the Trianon peace treaty signed in 1920 in Paris, which took away 2/3s of Hungary's territory and 1/3 of the Hungarian

population became citizen of another country. There was a short revision of this division between 1938 and 1945 when Hungary allied with the fascist Germany. However, after World War II. Hungary found itself on the losers' side again, so the 1920 frontiers were more or less restored. Both Hungary and Czechoslovakia, as well as most of the countries with a Hungarian minority belonged to the Soviet block, where – according to the communistic internationalism – the minority problems were played down. In 1989, after the fall of the iron curtain Hungarians in Slovakia immediately formed their independent institutions and begun their democratic fight for their rights. The peaceful separation of Czechoslovakia and formation of the independent Slovak Republic in 1993 meant increased influence for Hungarians in the country, as their ratio rose to 10% of the whole population. It also meant a new upheaval of Slovak nationalism and anti-Hungarian moods, which became an integral part of some political parties' rhetoric. After 1989 Hungarians also formed their political parties which united in 1998 to form the center-right Party of the Hungarian Coalition (MKP). The MKP was a member of the government from 1998 to 2006, its support is around 10%.

HUNGARIANS IN SLOVAKIA - THE CURRENT SOCIAL SITUATION:

Hungarians in Slovakia as a whole belong to the socially weaker groups of population. This partly originates in the fact that they live in regions with the highest unemployment rates which still lack substantial economic investments. Furthermore, the educational level of Hungarians is lower than the Slovak average. Some Hungarians – especially from regions around Dunaszerdahely (Dunajska Streda) or Komarom (Komarno) – might also have problems with fluent Slovak, which makes it difficult for them to get well-paid jobs. As for demographic data of the Hungarian population in Slovakia, the last national caucus in 2001 showed a 50,000 loss, which is the highest in history of the Hungarian minority.

EDUCATION:

There are Hungarian schools on every level of the educational system in Slovakia – from kindergartens to the university. The Hungarian university in Slovakia was created in 2004 in Komarom. The state finances the Hungarian school system and there are some private schools as well. In general it can be stated that there are Hungarian schools in all areas inhabited by Hungarians, so anyone can send their children to learn in their native language. Paradoxically, there is a rising trend of Hungarian children in Slovak schools. In Hungarian schools students learn every subject in Hungarian and they also learn the official language.

CULTURE:

The Hungarian culture in Slovakia can be called well developed – there are many organizations, publishing houses contributing to it. The state finances minority culture, of course critics say the amount of the support is ineligible. Hungary also contributes to the culture-financing with a substantial sum annually. The greatest cultural organization of the Hungarians called CSEMADOK has a well developed network throughout the

country, its local organizations exist in almost every village with a Hungarian population. There are two state-financed Hungarian theatres in Slovakia (in Komarom and Kassa, in Slovak: Košice) and also a state-financed professional folkdance group called Ifju Szivek. Several private publishers publish books in Hungarian to which the state also provides a financial support.

MEDIA:

Hungarians in Slovakia have a relatively wide range of media at their disposal. The only daily newspaper is Uj Szo published by the private Petit Press which also publishes the Hungarian weekly family magazine Vasarnap. There are a number of other weeklies and magazines, as well as web-sites written in Hungarian. Both the Slovak state TV and radio has their Hungarian programmes – in the TV it is a daily 10 minute long news, and the radio even has an independent Hungarian broadcasting called radio Patria, which broadcasts 8 hours a day in Hungarian.

ECONOMY:

As mentioned before, the Hungarian population lives in the Southern part of the country which is less industrialized and its geographic characteristics makes it suitable for agriculture. Therefore many Hungarians work in agriculture, traditional brands of production is wheat, sunflower and pigs. Unfortunately, the ratio of entrepreneurs between Hungarians is also lower than the country's average, however, many of them run small or medium size businesses of their own.

TOURISM:

Regions inhabited by Hungarians in Slovakia are especially suitable for agro- and spa-tourism. There are many spas especially in South-west Slovakia, some of which have recently been transformed into modern wellness-centers. Also, the natural environment of Hungarian regions is attractive touristically – on the west it is the small Danube with its alluvial forests, in the central area it is the region of Gömör with hills and forests and in the very East it is the Tokaj wine-region. Again, the problem often is the lack of economic input – while the countryside is beautiful, the regions need more investment to be able to offer tourists service on a high level.

LINKS ABOUT HUNGARIANS IN SLOVAKIA ON THE INTERNET: www.foruminst.sk,
www.mkp.sk

