

FERENC EILER

The Experiences of Four Years of Operation of the National German, Slovak, and Croatian Minority Self-Governments

ABSTRACT: Minority Self-Governments have been operating in Hungary since 1995. In this article the author reviews the work of the assemblies, committees, executives, and administrators of the German, Slovak, and Croatian self-government bodies. The past four years have been trying, given that the communities had little previous experience with self-governance. However, with experience having been gained, the groups are now more likely to move beyond mere minority interest-defense activities and into active community organization and governance.

After a long period of preparations and negotiations, on July 7, 1993, the Hungarian Parliament, with a 96 % majority, passed the law – as harmonized with international legal decrees – concerning the rights of national and ethnic minorities. The declared goal of the law was to secure “all those rights which persons belonging to minorities have as Hungarian citizens, and further not only the human rights of these communities, but those political rights which will advance the preservation of national or ethnic self-identity,”¹ based on the principles of self-governance, subsidiarity and decentralization, through the establishment of a unique mixture of personal, local and functional autonomy.

One of the most important guarantees of cultural autonomy found in Law LXXVII of 1993 is the decreed goal of the establishment and effective operation of minority self-governments through democratic procedures.² In the spirit of this goal, the first minority self-governments were founded in two stages, based on the results of minority elections taking place alongside local elections on December 11, 1994, and of the November 19, 1995 minority elections.³ The law made it possible for minority self-governments to convene a meeting of the electorate to establish a national local government, and of the 13 domestically recognized ethnic groups in Hungary, 11 established such national bodies in 1995.

This study examines the operation of the national German, Slovak, and Croatian self-governments from 1995 to 1998.⁴ As the problems of the Roma minority have points of emphasis differing from those of the above-mentioned groups – who are the most populous minorities, following the Roma minority – we did not include the National Roma Minority Self-Government in the group of studied self-governments.

*The Organs of the National Self-Governments*⁵

The Assembly

The number of members of the Assembly is set by the minority law and allows for a maximum of 53 persons.⁶ Of the three largest minorities, the Germans and Slovaks delegated 53 each, while the Croats delegated 50 representatives to their national self-government assemblies. The vast majority of delegates in all three assemblies are intellectuals. The ratio of those with only secondary-level education is considerably lower, while the ratio of those who work in physical labor is nominal. The gender distribution favors men, with the ratio of women in the assemblies falling between 30 and 45 percent.

Based on the organizational and operational regulations, all three assemblies convene four times per year, but when necessary – and there were examples of this in all three self-governments – they may hold singular meetings. The members of the assemblies have their transportation costs to assembly meetings covered, and the Slovak self-government pays members an honorarium to compensate for time lost at the workplace.

The Committees

In order to ensure the effective execution of self-government responsibilities and to secure legality, the assemblies establish committees. The committee structure for delimiting given areas differs across the studied self-governments. While the Germans set up five committees (legal and procedural, economic, education, culture, oversight and control committees),⁷ the Slovaks set up six (legal and procedural, economic, education and youth, culture and religion, finance and oversight, public communication and publishing), and the Croats established eight (procedural, economic, education, public culture, sport and youth, finance and oversight, international relations, media and publishing, social policy and religious affairs).

The main criteria for membership is expertise, and for this reason there are some committee members (almost all of whom have a college or university education) who are not members of the assembly. Travel costs for committee members are reimbursed (again, in the case of the Slovak self-government, there is an honorarium paid to committee members).

It is the case for all three self-governments that there are significant differences in quality across the activities of the committees. There are some committees which work in an exceptionally effective way, but in all three self-governments there are those committees whose operations leave much to be desired (there was even a case where the same committees were unable to reach decisions numerous times).⁸

The Presidency

When working out organizational and operational regulations, only the German and Slovak representatives decided to establish the institution of the presidency. The president and the presidents of the committees automatically become presidency members in both self-governments. Where for the German self-government committee presidency automatically brings designation as vice-president, the Slovak assembly elects three vice-presidents separately, who also become members of the presidency. Further, the Slovak deputy-president and the German delegates from the county self-government associations become members of their respective presidencies.⁹

The Slovak presidency generally meets every other month, while the German presidency convenes ten times per year. When necessary, both presidencies hold singular meetings. The Croatian self-government has no formal presidency, but the president, the two vice-presidents, and the presidents of the committees meet before every assembly meeting to prepare for the meetings. This functions as a kind of consulting body, which can present recommendations to the committees, but which does not have any extraordinary powers.¹⁰ The Slovak and Croatian president (and the Slovak deputy-president) receive salaries as established by the self-governments, whereas the president of the German self-government has some of his/her costs reimbursed. While the members of the German and Croatian presidencies have cost reimbursement, the members of the Slovak presidency receive honoraria.

The Office of the National Self-Government

All three assemblies established offices to handle the official business and administration of the self-governments' activities. These are the executive organs of the national self-governments. The offices are headed by an office director (managing director, managing secretary), who chooses staff through a tender system, and who is, in effect, an employee of the president. In the interest of effectiveness, the work of the offices operates based on an executive officer system. This system, because of the differing ways of classifying areas of activity, is structured differently by the three self-governments. The structure of the German office is a direct reflection of the structure of the committees of the national self-government. The Slovak self-government office has three specialists: they are officers for cultural affairs, educational affairs, and communication. The Croatian office has three officers as well. Two of them cover the territories of seven committees, while the third officer is responsible for following the education scene. Further, they have a chief accountant and a financial official. Besides the officers, the offices naturally employ a secretary as well. The German national minority self-government operates regional offices as well, which are subsidiaries of the central office.¹¹ In most of these offices there is one full-time employee or two part-time employees.

When selecting employees, the main considerations of all the self-governments are expertise and the ability to speak the language well. Belonging

to the minority is an advantage, but not a requirement. The salaries of the employees of the three national self-governments vary, but no one has left their job because of inadequate pay. Over the past four years the offices have been rather stable. In the Croatian and Slovakian offices, the same staff has been handling self-government affairs for four years now, while in the German office the managing director and two employees left (one of whom later returned).

The Financial Conditions of Operations

Chapter VIII. of the law on minorities legally guarantees the state's role in financing the minority self-government system. The law describes two means of financing: organization-funding and activity- or function-funding. The first is meant to establish the operation requirements for the self-governments, while the second allows for the organizations and self-governments to gain state funding for activities through a tender system.¹²

The law on minorities granted startup capital to the national self-governments in the form of MOL (Hungarian Oil Company) shares, which for the three self-governments of this study meant 30 million HUF each.¹³ All three national self-governments circulate their startup capital, though a portion of the Croatian shares were sold on the stock exchange, and the received sum was used to buy the 222 m² office (which was formerly rented) for the Association of Hungarian Croats on Nagymező St. in Budapest.¹⁴ The law had a provision for providing the self-governments with maximum 300 m² of usable space to allow for adequate operation (which could not ensue without office space).¹⁵ Since the time the law was passed, the issue of headquarters has been settled, and the three self-government offices run in their respective spaces.¹⁶

The central budget designates an annually determined sum for the operation of the national self-governments.¹⁷ Since 1997 the annual operations budgets have been put under a separate title in the budget law. According to the distribution of the budget support for the 11 national minority self-governments, the German body received 22% of the total support (this rate was 20 % in 1995), while the Slovaks and Croats received 10% each.¹⁸ Budget support, however, covers more or less only

operation costs. This position of the leaders of the self-governments was confirmed by the report of the State Audit Office in 1997.¹⁹

Support for various programs and events can be gained by the self-government and associations through submitting proposals to the state-established Public Foundation for Hungarian National and Ethnic Minorities.²⁰ The same goal is served by the tender system of the Ministry of Culture and Education. Beyond state support, the self-governments have the right to establish foundations to serve the more effective financing of the minority. The German and Croatian national self-governments made use of this opportunity. The organization called “German Culture in Hungary” is already operational, while “Hungarian Croatians for the Third Millennium” is expected to begin its activities in the near future.²¹

Section 56 of Chapter VIII of the minority law makes it possible for the minorities to receive funding from foreign organizations, foundations, and individuals. In this way it has become possible for the mother country, or organizations from the mother country, to take on a role in the work of preserving and strengthening the identity of their respective minorities in Hungary. The level of support arriving from the mother country significantly differs across the three minorities of this study and – should we consider Hungarian support a given – this seriously effects the circumstances and opportunities of the ability of the minority to function.

The German minority receives the most serious support from abroad. The mother country has a thought-out concept regarding the support of German minorities living in democratic states in East-Central Europe. Germany’s economic strength makes it possible for such support to arrive in the form of serious financial aid. Through a Bundestag decree, Germany supports Hungarian Germans with 2-2.5 million DM per year.²² A significant part of this sum is not given directly to the minority. The German state spends large amounts on modernizing and expanding Hungarian institutions, and equipping hospitals. But the German state does not provide money to anyone in Hungary without the approval of the German self-government. Money is most often given in those regions which are frequented by the German minority to institutions which have local responsibilities and which cannot be privatized.

Support from the German state is directed through the Ministry of the Interior and the Foreign Affairs Ministry. The Ministry of the Interior

offers support mostly for purchasing equipment and building infrastructure, while the Foreign Affairs Ministry, which has a lower aid budget, offers support for culture (retraining teachers, textbooks, teaching aids, the Szekszárd German Theater, the Lenau-house in Pécs). Germany has offered support for equipping the offices of all the national self-governments and for the salaries of the regional offices – albeit at a lower rate every year. The national self-government purchased a villa on Lendvay street (in Budapest) with German state funds, and Germany will cover the costs of renovation and furnishing.²³ Beyond this, large amounts have been spent on the 100-120 clubs and the equipping of daytime homes for the elderly. Beside the German federal state and states, various German foundations support the German minority in Hungary. Of these, the most significant include the Donauschwabische Kulturstiftung and the Hermann-Niermann-Stiftung.²⁴

The national Slovak minority self-government did not have a balanced relationship with Slovak state organs from the start. It took some time for them to reach a point where the offices of the mother country – which at the beginning wanted to maintain relations only with civic organizations – considered the self-governments as partners. At the governmental level, they have relations with the Foreign Ministry, and the Ministry of Culture and Education. Hungarian Slovak organizations receive fiscal aid more rarely – aid from the mother country usually comes in the form of goods.²⁵ However, serious aid was turned to equipping and developing the infrastructure of the national self-government headquarters.

The Cross-Border Slovaks' House, the Slovak National Culture Center, Matica Slovenska, and other foundations sometimes support the Slovak minority. They send books and offer spaces and reduced-rate accommodations for participants in conferences, reading camps, and training sessions. First and foremost they support culture, with education being less important.

Of the three self-governments, the Croatian counts on the least support from the mother country. This is only partially due to the stormy political life of the country's first few years, and is attributable more to the fact that the country – despite its good relations with Hungary – has not come to realize the meaning of its minorities living outside its borders in neighboring countries.²⁶ The self-government has a flexible relationship with the Ministry of

Culture and Education and with Matica Hrvatska, and is regularly invited to various events in Croatia. Last year there was a Hungarian-Croatians' Week organized in Zagreb. Material aid is not really provided by Croatia – to this point the self-government has received a computer and various visiting delegations have received books.

Relations with Local Minority Self-Governments

A necessary condition for the successful operation of the minority self-governments is a problem-free relationship between the local and national levels. This to a large degree depends on the flow of information between the levels.

Local minority self-governments can be informed of the activities of the national minority self-governments through the reports of delegated representatives, the reports of minority press, newsletters, and personal meetings at provincial sessions. While this in theory means everyone should be informed, local-level complaints concerning the lack of information are somewhat common. The offices of the national self-governments could make up for this problem if every assembly member lived up to his/her responsibility to inform the self-government he/she represents.

Regarding the activities and problems of the local self-governments, the leaders of the national self-governments feel that they are adequately informed.²⁷ The Slovak and Croatian local minority self-governments do not report on their activities to the central body. Should one of them do so, it is based on self-initiative. The provincial meetings and system of personal contacts allow for them to have more-or-less fresh information concerning problems. By the end of the first cycle, the national German self-government, parallel to building and consolidating a county level, had achieved a system where most of the minority self-governments reported their information. The local minority self-governments report to the counties. The county level attaches the local reports to the reports of their own activities.

Should problems arise between the local minority self-government and the municipal government, the leaders of the national self-government travel to the scene and try to solve the problem. There is rarely need for this, and when it does occur, resolution is usually achieved.

For the minority self-governments to operate effectively, the representatives working at the local level must have at least minimal knowledge of the models, rights, and responsibilities of self-governments. For many – given that this is a completely new activity for them – there is a need to master much more hands-on information: e.g., how to write an official letter or how to write a proposal. This is a real problem for all three self-governments. The Croatian national self-government holds 2-3 forums per year, to which they invite self-government representatives, mayors, and even notaries. These are not really training sessions, but they do allow for discussion of relevant issues. The Slovak self-government organizes one training (and information) session per year in the mother country and 1-2 per year in chosen regions. These are not strictly ‘professional’ training sessions either, although the participating self-government members do receive information on interpreting laws. The Germans have achieved the most in this field, who – thanks to support from the mother country – have conducted live-in courses (most recently in Baja) on state law, party law, education policy, ethics, and behavioral norms, for representatives working in and elected to minority self-governments.

Areas Deemed Important for the Maintenance of Identity

Education

Minority education has an important role in the survival of minorities and in the strengthening of their self-awareness and independence. This is well-known by the self-governments, and they have either already worked out their education strategies, or will have them completed in the near future.²⁸ It is extremely important that the state cooperate with the national minority self-governments in working out the guiding principles of education. All three self-governments have delegated experts to the appropriate agency in order that the minorities themselves may participate in working out educational reform. As a result, the minimum requirements of schools are now available. According to these requirements, given school types must include minority studies in their curricula.²⁹ The curricula are designed by the schools themselves. The Slovak self-government included

sample curricula in the minority newspaper in order to assist effected teachers and schools. The national self-governments feel it is necessary to practice control over various educational institutions. Theoretically this is possible, but given that the legal status of these kinds of schools is unclear, and that the issue of financing them has still not been settled, not one of the national self-governments has taken the first steps in this direction.³⁰

The municipal governments themselves cannot give foreign scholarships to their young constituents, but they can participate in running higher-education study programs managed by the mother country. While the Croatian self-government only participates in preparatory stages, the Germans have the right to help judge candidates. The Slovak self-government chooses candidates itself. According to general experience, there have to this point not been enough candidates, or the qualifications of the candidates have not met desired standards. The highest number of scholarships are available for ethnic German youth, as for them, not only the state, but private foundations run competitions for scholarships as well. To a limited degree, the German and Slovak self-governments support trips – reading camps, cultural events – for elementary and secondary school students, to the mother country.

Associations

All three minorities have local and national civic associations. The national self-governments do not contribute directly to their operation, but through tender programs they can support events and projects. While the German self-government – with the exception of a modest sum³¹ – plays only the role of mediator between supporters from Germany and the associations, the Slovak and Croatian self-governments announce tender programs for the sums they designate from their state support sums.³² The Slovaks consider the support of local organizations one of their primary goals, while the Croatians favor the financial support of events which are at least regional in character (i.e., above the local level). In some cases the German and Slovak associations can receive support from their respective national self-governments to appear abroad. Alliances which have continued to operate since the establishment of the local governments have had

a significant role in the organization of Slovakian and Croatian cultural life and in supporting cultural organizations.

Only the German national self-government has declared as a goal, and taken steps toward, the national-level integration of tradition-preservation. As a result of its initiative, the umbrella organization for 374 tradition-preservation and cultural groups, the Hungarian German Vocal, Musical, and Dance Groups Council, was established in 1996. Its role is to work out the development strategy and ensuing programs for Hungarian German vocal, musical, and dance culture, and to secure the conditions for the execution of the programs.³³

Church Relations

Paragraph 11 of the minority law states that “members of minorities have the right to attend religious services in their own language.” The question of the language of the service (mass) is influenced by several factors: it depends on the flexibility of church leaders and local ministers, on whether the church has any ministers who speak the language at hand, and on local needs. Although all three minorities have associations which deal with questions of faith, it can be said that this process is still in its infancy.

On the part of the state, municipal governments, at the end of the last cycle, made attempts to begin an official dialogue, but the first meetings will likely need to be followed by other similar meetings.³⁴ The attempts at cooperation were naturally paralleled by similar attempts by the minority governments. The national Slovak self-government and the Lutheran church, for example, established relations with one another in the interest of establishing the financial framework for the work of a Slovak-speaking ‘wandering minister’.³⁵ The Croatian self-government’s social policy and religious affairs committee has held three national conferences for the priests, catechism teachers, and school leaders of Croatian communities. The leader of the committee deemed the meetings successful, and feels that progress has been made. However, there is a certain reservation on the part of the churches. A possible reason for this may be the fear of losing some church independence.³⁶

Youth Organizations

Youth organizations function completely independently of the national self-governments.³⁷ They do not receive money from the self-governments, and are not obliged to report to them. Their operations are supported by the human rights committee of Parliament, and they independently raise funds for their programs. Although there is no close cooperation between any of the national self-governments and minority organizations, the representatives of the young are invited to self-government events. The German and Slovak youth organizations learn of self-government activities first-hand, as some of their leaders are concurrently members of the assembly.

Media

All three national minority self-governments are aware that “regarding the self-identity of minorities, it is of primary importance that they be represented in public media through well-produced, quality programs of adequate length. Beyond this, it is also of primary importance for the minorities that the majority society be aware of their lives and their existence as minorities.”³⁸ The minority law mandates that public television and radio play programs in the languages of all three minorities.³⁹ In the past few years, programming changes in Hungarian Television and Hungarian Radio have led to broadcast times of minority programs which result in unnaturally low audiences. The issue was examined by the Ombudsman, and his recommendations were heard and accepted by the appropriate agencies.⁴⁰

All three self-governments have employees who are responsible for media relations. According to their experiences, relationships with newspaper journalists are acceptable – although they could no doubt be improved. The attention of the media (newspapers, public and commercial television and radio) – given its very nature – is unfortunately subject to fluctuations. Regarding the official papers of the minorities, they are dependent on their national self-governments, and their finances are ensured by the Hungarian National and Ethnic Minority Public-Purpose Foundation.⁴¹ The German self-government established its official paper, the German Self-Government Bulletin, which is an occasional publication, as it is planned to be printed four times per year.

The “Political Network”

Relationships with State Organs

According to paragraph 38, line 1, part a) of the minority law, the national self-government may provide opinions representing its constituents regarding draft laws. This is supplemented by paragraphs 27-31 of Law XI. of 1987, according to which the organs drafting legal regulations are obliged to consult with those thus empowered – in this case the national self-governments – in the process of preparing the law. In the previous four years the experiences of the three self-governments all show that relations in this regard with ministries and county and city assemblies were not without their problems. On many occasions the plans which were in their sphere of competence were handed over late, sometimes just a couple of days before return deadlines. Of course one cannot generalize, as there are serious differences in the practices of various organs. In this regard the weakest link in the chain is that of the counties. The relationship with the National and Ethnic Minority Office (NEKH) was often deemed as good by the leaders of the self-governments, with the added comment that after years of feeling one another out, it would now be a good idea to deepen cooperation.

Relations with the Other National Minority Self-Governments

There is no institutionalized relationship among the different national self-governments. The minority roundtable no longer functions, and in its current form and situation the Minority Forum does not appear to be capable of harmonizing the activities of minority self-governments. All the national self-governments support some form of cooperation in their declarations, but given their own problems and their divergent interests, thinking together has been impossible to this point. Currently cooperation consists of sitting at one table when negotiating with the government, or inviting one another to larger events. The Minority Forum is undoubtedly a form of cooperation – all three assemblies have pledged their moral support – but this is really an independent election alliance, whose members join as individuals based on personal decisions, and in this way they are independent of the national self-governments.

The Minority Law

The most positive aspect of the law, according to the self-governments, is the fact that it exists at all. They feel it is a good framework which makes clear the relation-system of the minorities, and which creates the opportunity for the minorities to organize themselves and strengthen their self-awareness. It is necessary, however, to harmonize the minority law with other laws. Another deficiency they sense is that the financial background is not adjusted to the theoretical declarations. Further, the minority law's sections on financing are only general in their nature. They can serve as guiding principles, but in the absence of their detailed description, they cannot provide full orientation.⁴²

There is, in many cases, no guarantee for executing the opportunities described in the law, and the issue of sanctioning violations of the law is unsolved.⁴³ The institution of the ombudsman is deemed extremely important by all, but as the opinions of the Parliamentary commissioner on the rights of national and ethnic minorities serve only as recommendations, it sometimes occurs that the legally-supported positions often never come to the attention of those who break the law. The development of the county level is also an important issue whose resolution in the near future is necessary, as is the issue of minority representation in Parliament.

Parliamentary Representation and Self-Government Elections

“The neglect of the unconstitutional conduct of Parliament, whereby it has not drafted the law concerning the Parliamentary representation of national and ethnic minorities, despite the decision of the Constitutional Court [35/1992. (VI. 10.)], and despite its own position as described in the Law on National and Ethnic Minorities [§ 20. (1)]” still stands.⁴⁴ The effected national minority self-governments feel that the earliest resolution of the issue is necessary. Although preliminary negotiations were conducted previous to the 1998 Parliamentary elections, the lack of political will meant that the electoral law was not modified. It must be added that the leaders of the minorities themselves lack a unified position on judging the criteria for gaining representation in Parliament.⁴⁵ The differences in opinion between leaders of small and large minorities regarding the

Parliamentary threshold are obvious. The unresolved nature of the problem led all three national self-governments of this study to support in principle the Minority Forum, which was registered at the last minute. It could probably have been anticipated that the Forum would not be able to send even one representative to Parliament, but its activities were meant to draw attention, and in this sense they certainly succeeded.⁴⁶

Regarding elections to self-governments, a basic and contested issue is the granting of the franchise to certain groups. Currently most are of the position that, in accordance with current practice, any Hungarian citizen should be able to express his/her support by voting. Of course this can lead to the awkward situation whereby a local minority self-government with support from the majority can be established without the social support of the minority. As registering is not possible and is not supported by most minorities, this practice remained in place for the 1998 self-government elections. In the case of all three minorities an increase in the number of local minority self-governments took place, which may indicate that the self-government system is viable and beginning to consolidate itself in Hungary.⁴⁷

After Four Years

The leaders of the German, Slovak, and Croatian national minority governments interpret the first four years as being taken up by getting to know the new situation and making use of the opportunities established by the self-government system as defined by law. They went down an untrod-den path, but they all feel that the experiences of the first four years show that their self-governments – should conditions remain the same – will be able to operate more effectively than in the past. There are experts available for various areas of specialization, and they now have adequate experience. The main responsibility of national self-government is no longer thought to be interest defense, but, through the strengthening of political activity, a coordinating and informing role in the lives of their minority constituents.

NOTES

- ¹ Preamble to Law LXXVII of 1993 of the rights of national and ethnic minorities. In *Kisebbségi kódex* (Budapest: 1995), p. 14.
- ² The statistical indicators regarding minorities in Hungary are found in: *Az 1990. évi népszámlálás. Nemzetiség, anyanyelv, I-II. kötet* (Budapest: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1993). On the statistical analysis of the living conditions of minorities see *A nemzetiségek életkörülményei* (Budapest: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1995).
- ³ On the number of established local minority self-governments, see *Beszámoló a Magyar Köztársaságban élő nemzeti és etnikai kisebbségek helyzetéről* (J/3670), 4. Függelék, 1997 január.
- ⁴ Earlier, the three exclusively minority-interest groups we included in the study were the Association of Hungarian Germans, the Association of Hungarian Slovaks (earlier the Democratic Association) and the Association of Hungarian Croats (before 1991 the South-Slav Association). The German association dissolved itself, while the other two operate to this day.
- ⁵ See "A Magyarországi Németek Országos Önkormányzatának Alapszabálya," *Német Önkormányzati Közlöny*, 1997., 1. pp. 4-14. The organizational and operational regulations of the Slovak and Croatian self-government can be found in the document collections of the respective self-government offices.
- ⁶ Law on National and Ethnic Minorities. §63. paragraph 3.
- ⁷ The oversight committee reports the results of its investigations directly to the assembly.
- ⁸ Based on conversations regarding the German self-government with Lőrinc Kerner and Albert Koncsek, the cultural committee seemed to be outstanding. In: *Akadémiai Kisebbségkutató Műhely (AKM) Hangtár (HT)*, cassette 1.; Ételka Riba and Gyula Alt considered the efforts of the education committee of the Slovak self-government to be noteworthy. In AKM HT 4.; Richárd Pezenhofer and István Karagity also pointed out the outstanding work of the Croatian educational committee. In AKM HT 6.
- ⁹ The ten county association and Budapest delegate on representative each to the presidency.
- ¹⁰ AKM HT 6.
- ¹¹ The German national self-government has 11 regional offices. *A magyarországi németek* (Informational publication) (Budapest: 1998), p. 44.
- ¹² The selection and establishment of minority self-governments in Hungary. Expert panel. Stuttgart, 1995. p. 7.
- ¹³ Law on National and Ethnic Minorities. §63. paragraph 4.
- ¹⁴ AKM HT 6.

- ¹⁵ Law on National and Ethnic Minorities. §59. paragraph 2.
- ¹⁶ The headquarters are not considered the property of the national self-governments. As long as the self-governments operate, they have the right to use them, but should operations cease, the properties must be returned to the owner.
- ¹⁷ The financing of the operations of the national self-governments is independent of financing for local minority self-governments. On the financing system see "A kisebbségi feladatok költségvetési finanszírozásának rendszere," in *Beszámoló a Magyar Köztársaságban élő nemzeti és etnikai kisebbségek helyzetéről*.
- ¹⁸ This sum for the German body was 56.1 million HUF in 1996, 63.2 million in 1997, and 81.8 million in 1998. For the Slovak body the sum was 27 million HUF in 1996, 32 million in 1997, and 42 million in 1998. With the exception of 1998, the Croatian body received the same amount as the Slovaks. In 1998 they received 300,000 HUF less. See *A Magyar Köztársaság vonatkozó évi költségvetései*. CD-rom legal database.
- ¹⁹ Állami Számvevőszék, *Összefoglaló értékelés, következtetések, javaslatok*, V-1008/1997, Tsz. 371.4.
- ²⁰ *A Magyarországi Nemzeti és Etnikai Kisebbségekért Közalapítvány 1996. évi támogatásai* (Budapest: 1997); *Magyarországi Nemzeti és Etnikai Kisebbségekért Közalapítvány 1997. évi támogatásai* (Budapest: 1998).
- ²¹ "Founding Document of the "Német Kultúra Magyarországon" Foundation," *Német Önkormányzati Közlöny*, 1997.2. pp. 21-31.
- ²² AKM HT 1.
- ²³ According to plans, the building will be the center for Hungarian Germans. The official German minority newspaper and library will move here. It is possible that the GJU, the Hungarian German youth organization, currently housed in Pécs, will move its office to this new location.
- ²⁴ The Hermann-Niermann-Stiftung, for example, has provided hundreds of thousands of DM to construct the loft of the Sopron Lutheran Lyceum (rooms, assembly hall).
- ²⁵ The Slovak Cultural Center in Békéscsaba and the Slovak House in Bánk have received significant material support from the mother country. AKM HT 4.
- ²⁶ AKM HT 6.
- ²⁷ In 1996 the national Slovak self-government conducted a survey to map out the concrete steps and needs of the settlements. The results were published in 1997 in *A magyarországi szlovák nemzeti kisebbség helyzete* (Budapest: 1997), pp. 69-98. The national German self-government tried to measure the relationship between local minority self-governments and municipal governments in 1995-96 through the use of a questionnaire survey. See *Vérhältnis zwischen ungarndeutschen Minderheitenselbstverwaltungen und der örtlichen Selbstverwaltung 1995-96*. The sum-

- mary of the results is available in the document collection of the German self-government office.
- ²⁸ Stipan Blazetin (ed.), "Irányelvek és követelmények a magyarországi horvát oktatási rendszerben," *Hrvatski Glasnik*, 1998.; *Pre ucastnikov pracovneho stretnutia slovenskych organizácii a CSS, konane v Bekesskej Cabe* (Békéscsaba: 1997). The document can be found in the Slovak self-government's collection.
- ²⁹ "Nemzeti alaptanterv, tantervi alapelvek (Melléklet a 31/1994. Kormányrendelethez)," in *Kisebbségi kódex* (Budapest: 1995), pp. 211-212.
- ³⁰ The German self-government did not take over educational institutions either. The Hungarian German Education Center in Baja is operated as a public-purpose foundation. The city of Baja and the assembly of Bács-Kiskun county are, along with the German national self-government, members of the board, and contribute funds for the operation of the Center. AKM HT 2.
- ³¹ The cultural committee receives 500,000 Forint per year from the self-government with which it may support associations.
- ³² The national Croatian self-government designates 2 million Forint per year for this purpose. AKM HT 6.
- ³³ On the structure and programs of the Council, see *A magyarországi németek. Információs lap* (Budapest: 1998), pp. 27-32.
- ³⁴ AKM HT 5.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ AKM HT 6.
- ³⁷ The youth organizations operate through provincial centers. The German center is in Pécs, the Slovak is in Békéscsaba, and the Croatian is in Szombathely.
- ³⁸ *Report on the Activities of the Parliamentary Committee on National and Ethnic Rights. J/4048*. (Budapest: 1997), p. 48.
- ³⁹ See *Beszámoló a Magyar Köz társaságban élő nemzeti és etnikai kisebbségek helyzetéről*. Sections on Croats, Germans, and Slovaks.
- ⁴⁰ *Report on the Activities of the Parliamentary Committee on National and Ethnic Rights* (Budapest: 1997), pp. 47-50.
- ⁴¹ The official German paper is *Neue Zeitung*, and it receives support from the self-government. The official Slovak paper is *Ludove Noviny*, while the Croatian paper is *Hrvatski Glasnik*. On the support of the papers, see the 1996 and 1997 annual support of the Public-Purpose Foundation for Hungarian National and Ethnic Minorities.
- ⁴² For this reason section 64, paragraph 5 of the law calls for the drafting of governmental decrees regarding fiscal issues.
- ⁴³ An outstanding example of this is the case of the Lucfalva school. The commission of the school principle, who was delegated by the village's municipal government with the support of the Slovak minority government, was later revoked

by the municipal government. Regardless of the protests of the minority self-government which were based on its right to veto, the assembly did not change its decision. AKM HT 5.

⁴⁴ *Report on the Activities of the Parliamentary Committee on National and Ethnic Rights* (Budapest: 1997), pp. 95-97.

⁴⁵ The leaders of minorities with low populations are for the most part of the opinion that the just solution involves sending one representative from each minority to Parliament. The leaders of more populous minorities are not opposed to setting a – naturally preferential – threshold in the election law regarding gaining a seat in Parliament.

⁴⁶ Opinions on the activity of the Forum split the members of assemblies. Some considered it a necessary move, while others feel the entire project did too much damage.

⁴⁷ The number of local self-government initiatives is 267 for Germans, 77 for Slovaks, and 75 for Croatians.