

European tools of conflict management in Central and Eastern European states with Hungarian minorities

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Gearfetting

As gefolch fan 'e tweintichste-ieske fredesferdraggen, wenje hjoed de dei grutte groepen Hongaarsktaligen as minderheid yn Sintraal-Europeeske en East-Europeeske steaten lykas Roemenië, Slowakije en Servië. Dy steaten binne winlik opdield, neffens etnysk-linguistyske, religieuze en kulturele skiedslinen, tusken de Hongaarske minderhede-mienskippen en net-Hongaarske, d.w.s. Roemeenske, Slowaakske en Servyske, mearderhede-mienskippen. Hoewol't de ferhâldings tusken de Hongaarske minderheden en de steaten dêr't se yn wenje ferbettere binne nei de fal fan it kommunisme, binne de neamde ferhâldings perfoarst net frij fan spanningen en konflikten. Dy sitewaasje is fan negative ynfloed op 'e relaasjes tusken de steaten yn kwestje en it oanbuorjende lân fan oarsprong: Hongarije. Op sa'n wize sels, dat de koheezje yn 'e Europeeske Uny yn gefaar brocht wurde kin, dat dan wer in risiko ynhâldt foar de feiligens en (politike) stabiliteit yn Sintraal-Europa en yn de Balkanlannen.

Dit artikel giet oer middels dy't by de 'Europeanisearing' fan Sintraal- en East-Europa tapast wurde kinne om eventuele konflikten tefoaren te kommen. Sa soene de rjochten fan 'e minderheden waarboarge wurde kinne mei it ynsetten fan 'e Ried fan Europa (Trifunovska (2001, Schimmelfennig en Sedelmeier 2005). Oare opsjes om de posysje fan taalminderheden yn Europa net efterút gean te litten, binne it grutter meitsjen fan de kennis oangeande minderhede-kwestjes en it útwreidzjen fan it netwurk fan Europeeske minderheden. Om dy reden hat it doel en ferlykje de posysje fan de Hongaarske minderheden yn Sintraal- en East-Europa mei dy fan in nasjonale minderheid yn West-Europa, nammentlik de Friezen yn Nederlân. Ut dy ferliking wurdt de konklúzje lutsen, dat de posysje fan de Hongaarske minderheden en de Fryske minderheid ferlykber binne en dat mear oparbeidzjen tusken harren foar alle partijen foardielen opsmite kin.

Abstract

Due to twentieth century peace treaties, large Hungarian minorities live in such Central and Eastern European states as Romania, Slovakia and Serbia. These states are divided along ethnic-linguistic, religious and cultural lines between the Hungarian minority communities versus non-Hungarian, i.e. Romanian, Slovak and Serb majority communities. Although the relations between the Hungarian minorities and the states

they live in have improved after the fall of communism, these relations are not free of tensions and conflicts. This state of affairs negatively affects the relations between the states concerned and neighbouring kin-state Hungary, jeopardizing cohesion in the European Union and risking safety and security in Central Europe and the Balkans.

This paper discusses tools of conflict management that the Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe has to offer, including minority rights protection provided by the Council of Europe (Trifunovska 2001, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005). A further option to improve the position of minorities in Europe is to deepen the knowledge of minority issues and to extend the network of European minorities. From this point of view, it is relevant to compare the position of the Hungarian minorities in Central and Eastern Europe with the position of a national minority in Western Europe, the Frisians in the Netherlands. It will be concluded that the position of Hungarian and Frisian minorities is complementary and that more cooperation between them would be mutually advantageous.

Hungarian minorities in the Carpathian Basin

Due to the Peace Treaties finishing the First and Second World War and the formation of new states after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and former Yugoslavia, ethnic Hungarians have come to live in eight different states in Central and Eastern Europe, including the Republic of Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Slovakia and Ukraine (Chaszar 1982, Cadzow et al 1983, Fenyvesi 2005, Gal 2008). Ethnic Hungarians who live in all these countries are in fact autochthonous inhabitants, especially in those areas that belonged to the former parts of the Hungarian kingdom as a constituting entity of the Habsburg Double Monarchy (Cadzow et al 1983, Brubaker et al 2006). In the Hungarian discourse, this territory is often called the *Carpathian Basin*. This area is defined in geographical, common socio-cultural and linguistic terms (Teleki 1923). The following diagram displays the distribution of the ethnic Hungarians living in eight different states (Schöpflin 1993, Kántor et al 2004, Nádor and Szarka 2003, Fenyvesi 2005, Gal 2008). The data are from the 2001 official censuses (Kocsis, Bottlik and Tátrai 2006, 29):

Diagram 1
Ethnic Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin

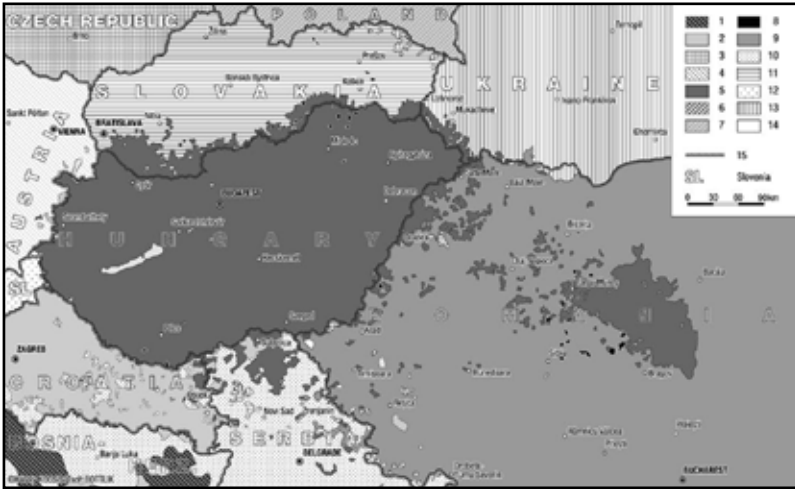
	Carpathian Basin
Hungary	10,360,000
Slovakia	520,000
Ukraine	200,000
Romania	1,930,000
Former Yugoslavia (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia)	455,000
Austria	5,000
Total	13,470,000

As can be seen from this diagram, most of the ethnic Hungarians live in the Republic of Hungary where they constitute more than ninety percent of the population. In all the other seven countries the Hungarians form a numeric minority and they have been granted the status of a national or ethnic minority. If we take into account the regions of the states where ethnic Hungarians live, the relevant percentual distributions yield the following results. Compare:

Diagram 2
Ethnic distribution in Carpathian Basin states

Region	Percentage of state nationality	Percentage of national minorities
Hungary	91.2	1.3
Slovakia	85.5	11.5
Sub-Carpathia (Ukraine)	80.5	18.3
Transylvania (Romania)	74.6	23.8
Vojvodina (Serbia)	65.0	26.7
Pannonian (Croatia)	90.1	7.7
Mura-region (Slovenia)	85.0	9.5
Burgenland (Austria)	87.4	12.5
Carpathian Basin	83.7	11.5

Ethnic Hungarians live mostly in compact territories bordering to the Hungarian kin-state (Tóth, 2004). These regions include the southern part of Slovakia (Nádor and Szarka 2003, Csergo 2007); the Transylvania region in Romania (Péntek and Benő 2003, Brubaker et al 2006, Péntek 2006); the Vojvodina province in Serbia (Nádor and Szarka 2003); the Ukrainian Sub-Carpathian region (Beregszászi and Csernicskó 2003); the Pannonian area of Croatia (Lábadi 2003); the Slovenian Mura-region (Kolláth 2003) and the Burgenland area in Austria (Szoták 2003). As we can see from the diagrams above, the largest groups of ethnic Hungarians outside Hungary live in Romania, Slovakia and Serbia.



In Slovakia, almost the entire ethnic Hungarian community lives in the southern parts of the country in a stroke of thirty kilometers next to the border with Hungary that is 681 kilometers long. Although the ethnic Hungarians form a substantial group in Slovakia, i.e. more than ten percent of the inhabitants of the country counting more than 500,000 people, their geographic distribution is rather complicated. In a number of districts in South Slovakia, ethnic Hungarians form an absolute majority; in others the ethnic Hungarians are only a relative majority and in a few districts ethnic Slovaks constitute the majority population. In Romania, most of the ethnic Hungarians live in the northwestern part of the country, i.e. the Transylvanian area which is a traditional multi-ethnic region. In fact, the Hungarian minority in Transylvania lives in the northern part of the area stretching from the Hungarian-Romanian border to Szeklerland, a region at the feet of the Eastern Carpathian

mountains deep in the heart of present-day Romania.¹ In this ‘corridor’, the ethnic Hungarians are not present in equal density, three subareas can be distinguished. First, ethnic Hungarians live in the so-called *Partium* area next to the border with Hungary. In *Partium*, a substantial percentage of ethnic Hungarians constitute an absolute or relative majority in a number of local districts. Secondly, in the middle part of the corridor, in the area with the capital of Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca (Hungarian Kolozsvár, German Klausenburg), ethnic Hungarians form a relative minority but in some districts they are a relative or absolute majority (Brubaker et al 2006). Finally, in Szeklerland where about 800,000 ethnic Hungarians, i.e. almost half of the Transylvanian Hungarians live, ethnic Hungarians are in an absolute majority. In the northern part of Serbia’s Vojvodina province, an absolute majority of Hungarians live in the Backa (Hungarian Bácska) area with the town Subotica (Hungarian Szabadka) as its centre. The around 350,000 Hungarians constitute fifteen percent of the inhabitants of Vojvodina (Kocsis and Kocsis-Hodosi 1995).

Ethnic conflicts in the Carpathian Basin

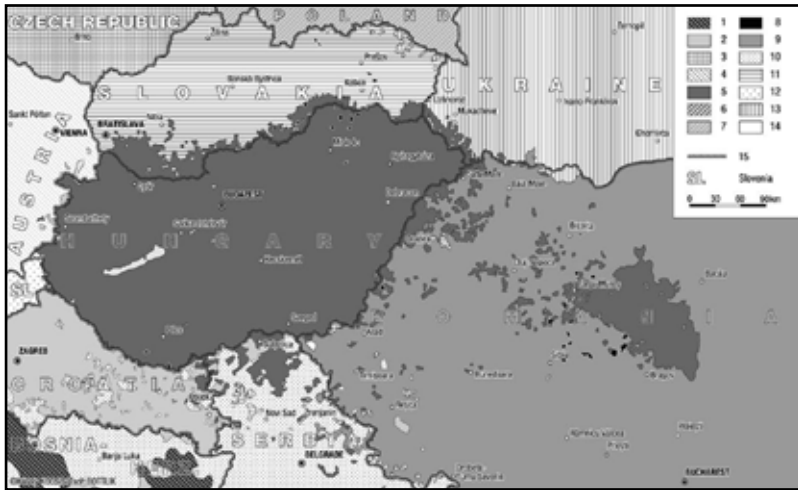
Three Hungarian minority cases have the potential for tensions and conflicts, namely the Hungarian minorities in Slovakia, Transylvania and Vojvodina (Marác 2008). The situation of the Hungarian minority has improved for the better in Serbia’s Autonomous Province Vojvodina, where recently the Hungarians and their language have received an official status being implemented in the constitution of the Serbian province. Neither Romania nor Slovakia, however, have assigned its Hungarian minorities constitutional rights yet. This means that since the fall of communism any right that has to do with the protection, preservation and development of the Hungarian identity, culture and language in these states has to be regulated by a separate law. The adoption of laws is, however, very much dependent on the power constellations in the political arena, that is in the Romanian and Slovak Parliaments.

The altering of the ethnic composition in areas with Hungarian minorities has not been an official policy in Romania or Slovakia since the collapse of communism. At least not in the way this was done under communism by bringing in Romanian and Slovak settlers in multi-

1 The Szeklers are ethnic Hungarians displaying a peculiar set of ethnographic and cultural properties due to the status as border guards they once had in the Hungarian kingdom.

ethnic territories in order to change the ethnic composition of those territories (Cadzow et al 1983). However, in all the states concerned the borders of the administrative districts inhabited by Hungarians have been drawn detriment to the interest of the Hungarian communities. In Slovakia a new system of public administration was introduced in 1996 during the years of the populist Meciar government. The Meciar government divided the country into 8 regions and 79 districts. The regions and districts were designed from north-to-south and not from east-to-west. The former make-up was disadvantageous for the Hungarian minority, whereas the latter one would have been more in the interest of the ethnic Hungarians. The Slovak Parliament adopted the redrawing of the regions and district in north-to-south direction. As a result of this division, the Hungarians in Slovakia were scattered over several different, i.e. over five of the eight regions. Some regions with a Hungarian majority were attached to Slovak regions in such a way that ethnic Hungarians lost their majority.

The network of Hungarian minority cultural institutions had to be rebuilt after the fall of communism. In the nineties, the Hungarian communities had to struggle in parliament and court for regaining control over the school system and their school buildings that were merged with non-Hungarian schools during communism. The Hungarian communities were not always successful in fulfilling this asset. Successive Romanian governments decided that the former Hungarian Bolyai University in the Transylvanian capital Cluj-Napoca would remain part of the Romanian Babes-Bolyai University. Instead, the Romanian state declared the Babes-Bolyai University officially a multilingual university performing education in Romanian, Hungarian and German, the traditional languages of Transylvania. In order to counterbalance this decision, the Transylvanian Hungarian community has set up new education institutions for higher education, like the private Hungarian language Saptientia University that has faculties in several Transylvanian towns (Brubaker et al 2006).



In most of the states in the Carpathian Basin, the Hungarian language has been the target of discriminative and restrictive provisions, like language laws specifying when the official majority state language must be used, the Hungarian minority language may be used and what percentage of the total inhabitants of an administrative unit must be Hungarian in order to allow the use of the Hungarian language officially (Péntek and Benő 2003). Article 13 of the Romanian constitution stipulates that the Romanian language is the only official language of the country. This has far-reaching consequences for the multi-ethnic and multilingual communities of Romanians, Hungarians and Germans in Transylvania. Next to the constitutional article specifying the use of the official state language, further legal provisions restrict the use of Hungarian and other minority languages, like the Law on Education or the Law on Public Administration of 2001. Article 32.127 of the Law on Education states that the subjects of history and geography are to be taught in Romanian only. Consequently, Hungarian school kids in Transylvania do not learn the topographical names in their native tongue Hungarian but only in Romanian. This affects the identity of Hungarians in Romania negatively. Due to article 215 of the Law on Public Administration, the use of Hungarian and other minority languages is restricted in public administration. Only if national or ethnic minority communities constitute at least twenty percent of the population of an administrative unit local names, street names and other topographical indications may be visible in the minority language in the linguistic landscape. Therefore, even in a city like Cluj-Napoca where at least 70,000 speakers, that is 19.9 percent of the total inhabitants according to the last Romanian census of 2001, are ethnic Hungarian, signs of local

and street names in the city are only monolingual in Romanian (Péntek and Benő 2003).

Pacifying the ethnic conflicts in the Carpathian Basin

At present the Council of Europe specifies two legal treaties that are relevant for the protection of national and ethnic minorities and their languages, namely the so-called Language Charter, i.e. the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (CETS no. 148) signed on November 5, 1992 in Strassbourg and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (CETS no. 157, henceforth Framework Convention) concluded on February 1, 1995 in Strassbourg. Commentators agree that a general application of these conventions should contribute significantly to the stability, democratization and peace in Europe. All the states with Hungarian minorities have signed and ratified these treaties. The Framework Convention supports the positive discrimination of the identity of minorities on the basis of human rights and general freedom rights, it recognizes the fact that minority rights are collective rights and that cross-border cooperation is not only restricted to states but that also local and regional authorities can take part in this. These provisions are highly relevant to the Hungarian communities in the Carpathian Basin. As we have discussed above, borders with Hungary separate ethnic Hungarian communities from their co-nationals in Hungary.

In principle, the Hungarian minorities and their identity are legally protected by these two conventions all over the Carpathian Basin. A weakness of these conventions is that the Council of Europe has no sanctioning mechanism at its disposal, if contracting parties violate them. Contrary to the obligations to protect and promote the languages of national minorities in the framework of the Language Charter signed in 2001 by the pro-European, Slovak government of Miklos Dzurinda, the nationalist government under leadership of Prime Minister Robert Fico recently completed the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 270/1995 on the state language of the Slovak Republic. The law entered into force on September 1, 2009. Instead of protecting the languages of the national minorities in Slovakia, the act calls for the protection of the state language and specifies when the official state language must be used, marginalizing the use of the Hungarian minority language from the official segments of life. All servants belonging to the state are obliged to speak the state language, i.e. Slovak only. Consequently, ethnic Hungarian employers of the Fire and Rescue Services are allowed to speak with each other only Slovak on duty (art. 1.6.1). In fact, the normal social behavior for ethnic Hungarians even when employed by

the Slovak state will be hindered. The Slovak language law also specifies that anytime the language of the minority is used it must be accompanied and preceded by the state language. As a consequence, the complete education and administrative documentation of Hungarian schools has to be bilingual (art. 1.4.3). The most macabre provision is maybe article 1.5.7, dictating the use of the state language on scriptures of monuments, memorials and memorial tables. If any other, non-state language is used, let's say a Hungarian scripture on a tombstone, it has to be preceded in the state language, i.e. Slovak and the scripture of the non-state language consists of letters of the same or smaller size than the scripture in the state language. So even the dead men in Slovakia are not allowed to rest in peace, for the language on their tombstone is controlled by the state. To do otherwise than the Slovak language law specifies is not without sanctions. In case of offences, the Ministry of Culture can impose a fine ranging from 100 to 5000 EUR. The new Slovak government that came into office in the summer of 2010 promised to modify the language law and to drop some of its provisions unfriendly towards minority languages, but has not taken decisive steps yet.²

Comparing Frisian and Hungarian minorities

As the recognition of the Framework Convention and the Language Charter demonstrate, European policy aims at safeguarding minority rights and linguistic diversity in Europe (Extra and Gorter 2008). For European minority language communities it is relevant to exchange experiences and to cooperate in the European context. By making comparative analyses and case studies, we gain deeper insight into the actual state of affairs and this allows us to formulate new policy programs. The European context and solidarity offer the national and ethnic minorities a platform to break out of their isolated positions in nation states. In the present European framework, national and ethnic minorities may advocate their case by lobbying the European organizations, like the Council of Europe and offices and organizations of the Union, like the European Parliament, Eurydice, EuroLang and so on.

With the extension of the Union to Central and Eastern Europe, a number of new national and ethnic minorities have entered the Union. These minorities may profit from the experiences West European

2 Personal communication by Péter Öry, the mayor of the small town Stvrtok na Ostrove (Hungarian Csallóközcsütörtök) at the Slovak-Hungarian language border in South Slovakia.

minorities have in the field of legal provisions, education and education research. The legal status of Central and Eastern European minorities was often denied during the years of communism and the authorities did not allow research into minority issues treating ethnic issues as non-existent within a communist society. On the other hand, West European minorities can learn from Central and East European national and ethnic minorities how to maintain their identity in difficult times. Hence, it is justified to compare the situation of the Hungarian communities in the Carpathian Basin and the Frisian minority in the Netherlands, since both groups fall under the same Council of Europe framework.

The Frisian minority in the Netherlands lives in the bilingual province of Fryslân where Dutch and Frisian are spoken. About 55 percent of the 620,000 inhabitants of this province declare that Frisian is their native tongue and almost 76 percent of the population consider themselves belonging to the Frisian minority (Riemersma and De Jong 2007). This mismatch between Frisian language speakers and persons of Frisian identity is a striking difference with the Hungarian minority cases. Hungarian identity is closely connected to the control of the Hungarian language (see Brubaker 1996, Marác 2009 for discussion). Only persons who have a native language command of the Hungarian language may consider themselves of Hungarian identity. A further difference between the two cases has to do with typological considerations of the languages involved. In the case of Fryslân, the dominant languages Dutch and Frisian are closely related, belonging to the western branch of the Germanic languages. This pair is sometimes joined by English, that is taught as an L2 being compulsory in the Dutch education system. In this linguistic context, it is to be expected that interference will affect the quality of Frisian. For the Hungarian minority speakers in the Carpathian Basin such a danger hardly exist. The cleavages between the Hungarian language and the official languages, i.e. Slovak, Serb and Romanian, are much sharper than between the languages used in Fryslân. Hungarian is a non-Indo-European language having its own vocabulary and structure which is different from Slavic and Romance languages.

Although Fryslân is not recognized as an autonomous region within the constitution of the Netherlands, nor does the Dutch constitution acknowledge any separate clause for the Frisian language, this does not mean that the Frisian identity is legally worse off than the Hungarian minority cases in the Carpathian Basin. From an international point of view, their legal position is comparable because both the Netherlands, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and so on have signed and ratified the

Language Charter and the Framework Convention. However, there is an important structural difference between the Frisian case and the Hungarian minority cases in the Carpathian Basin. The province of Fryslân is embedded in the state structure of the Netherlands: it is one of the twelve provinces, including almost all of the speakers of Frisian in the Netherlands. Consequently, the province of Fryslân and its provincial and local authorities are not seen as “hostile” bodies in the state structure of the Netherlands. Rather the Dutch central government considers the provincial Frisian government as the negotiating partner in the issues related to the Frisian language and identity. In 2001, the central government of the Netherlands and the provincial government of Fryslân signed a Covenant in which the contracting parties agreed that they have a common responsibility in protecting and promoting the Frisian language and culture in the province of Fryslân (Riemersma and De Vries 2009, 37). As a consequence of the Covenant and the Dutch international obligations, the central government in The Hague formally recognized the bilingual status of the province of Fryslân. This implies that the Frisian language has acquired a legally protected position in judicial, administrative and education matters and various sectors of society. Therefore, it is legal for Frisians to correspond with their local authorities in their native tongue. In the case of the Hungarian minorities in the Carpathian Basin, however, the administrative policy has been precisely the opposite of the Frisian case, namely not to embed the territories inhabited by Hungarians into the state structure. The only exceptions are the Szekler provinces of Harghita and Covasna that are embedded in the state structure of Romania. However, even if these provinces were to receive a status comparable to Fryslân in the Netherlands, they would not be able to represent all the speakers of Hungarian in Transylvania, i.e. most of the Hungarian speakers live outside the Szekler provinces. These provinces could represent more effectively the Hungarian identity, if Romania was no longer a national unitary state devolving political power from the central government in Bucharest to the provincial governments of the Szekler provinces. The debate on decentralization in Romania started only recently, however, and it could get impulses from the subsidiarity and decentralization debates in the Union, like those in the Netherlands on devolving political power, especially in the field of Frisian linguistic and cultural affairs from the central government in The Hague to the provincial government in Fryslân (see Riemersma and De Vries 2009 for discussion).

An advantage of the fact that the provincial government of Fryslân is legally competent in Frisian language, culture and education issues is that

it can develop a language policy on its own. Already in 1969, the provincial authority of the Frisian province gave itself the powers to determine the official spelling of the Frisian language. In 1980, the Frisian language was introduced as a compulsory subject in primary education. Although researchers and the Committee of Experts reporting to the Council of Europe on the evaluation of the Language Charter qualify the position of Frisian as a subject and a medium in education as marginal - there is not even bilingual education with Dutch and Frisian on equal footing - the provincial government of Fryslân can attain targets, like improving the situation of the Frisian language in education. The provincial government can stimulate the introduction of Frisian as a medium of instruction in primary education and as a compulsory subject in the upper grades in secondary education or the extension trilingual education which includes the use of Frisian and English as medium of instruction next to Dutch, to secondary schools (see De Jager and Van der Meer 2007; Riemersma and De Vries 2009 for discussion). Representatives of Hungarian minorities in the Carpathian Basin states cannot plan any future concerning education matters. They are on the defense all the time.

According to De Jager and Van der Meer (2007), the education model of the Hungarians in Slovakia differs substantially from the Frisian education model in the Netherlands. As an outcome of tradition, the education model in the Carpathian Basin rooted in the Habsburg Monarchy could be qualified as a 'separate' system of monolingual schools. There exist some schools with parallel classes in which education in the official majority languages and the Hungarian minority language take place, but even in these cases the instruction is separate. Hungarian, however, is never taught in the majority language classes in schools with these parallel classes, not even in schools in areas where the minority language is dominant in daily use. In Slovak and Romanian schools only the state languages are subject and a medium of instruction, while in Hungarian language schools the official languages are taught as an L2. This means for Hungarian pupils in Slovakia one hour a day in the framework of Slovak language and literature lessons. The only cases in which Hungarian is not a medium of instruction is the teaching of geography and history. This is not allowed in a language other than the state language in Slovakia, Serbia and Romania, seriously affecting, however, the identity of the ethnic Hungarians in these countries.

Slovakia has ratified the Language Charter at level i, subscribing to make available education in and of the Hungarian language in both primary and secondary education (see De Jager and Van der Meer 2007, 10). This education model seems reasonably accommodating the traditional

situation and satisfying De Jager and Van der Meer's recommendation for countries that ratified the Charter at level i. These countries should guarantee that both primary and secondary schools use the minority language as language of instruction for more than fifty percent of the teaching time (De Jager and Van der Meer 2007, 26). However, the most important weakness of this model becomes clear, if we compare it with the provisions for Frisian. The situation of the Hungarian school system in the states with Hungarian minorities is far better than the one of Frisian in the Netherlands. The Netherlands ratified the Language Charter for primary education only at level ii which means that the Netherlands subscribed to make available only a substantial part of primary education in Frisian. Note, however, that Frisian in Fryslân is a compulsory subject, while, as De Jager and Van der Meer (2007, 10) correctly point out, Hungarian in Slovakia, but also in Romania and Serbia is optional. In those countries, minority speakers can choose between instruction in the minority language or in the majority, i.e. the official language. Consequently, although the education of Hungarian in Slovakia has a far better position than Frisian in the Netherlands, there are almost twice as many pupils that have followed Frisian as a subject in Fryslân's primary schools than Hungarian pupils having followed Hungarian as a subject in Slovakia's primary schools, i.e. 64,865 pupils for Frisian in 2004 and 36,249 pupils for Hungarian in 2007.³ The data are even more negative to the Hungarian side, if we take into account that there are almost twice as many ethnic Hungarians living in Slovakia than Frisians in the province of Fryslân. Of course, even in the case of level i obligations, it is always possible to obstruct the system with the help of technical or administrative means. One can neglect the creative aspect of the minority language by making available a specific set of teaching material in the state language only. In Slovakia, most of the Hungarian course books are translations from Slovak (De Jager and Van der Meer 2007, 15). Again, the problem of centralism surfaces in not respecting the interest of the minority language when a pedagogical supervisor for minority schools is attached to the State School Inspectorate not knowing the minority language, as is required by Slovak law. In May 2009, the ethnic Hungarian directors of the State School Inspectorate of the Szekler provinces Harghita, Covasna and Mures were replaced by Romanians who did not even speak the Hungarian language. The

3 See De Jager and Van der Meer (2007, 48) for the data on Hungarian in Slovakia and Riemersma and De Jong (2007) for the data on Frisian.

dismissal of the ethnic Hungarians raised public protest of Hungarians.⁴ Hence, the Hungarian communities in the Carpathian Basin will fully agree with De Jager and Van der Meer's (2007, 27) recommendations that the Council of Europe should stimulate countries to organize a supervisory body or to appoint special inspectors within a supervisory body who specifically monitor *in* and *of* the minority language, who publish periodic reports and have knowledge of the minority language and characteristics of high-quality instruction in a multilingual setting.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have discussed the position of the Hungarian minorities in the Carpathian Basin. It has been observed that ethnic Hungarian minority communities live in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual regions in seven states. In most of these regions there are tensions and conflicts between the Hungarian minorities and the states they live in. The Hungarian minorities strive for the protection of their minority and linguistic rights. It is not to be expected that their situation will be solved by a technical implementation of provisions protecting national and ethnic minorities only. These conflicts must be managed, however, because escalation can seriously threaten peace, stability and cooperation in Central Europe and the Balkans. Furthermore, these conflicts affect the relations of the states with Hungarian minorities with kin-state Hungary, that has cautiously been backing the claims of the Hungarian minorities since the collapse of communism. With respect to minority rights protection, the situation in Europe is complex and far from non-ambiguous. Only the countries from Central and Eastern Europe had to fulfill special requirements concerning national and ethnic minorities when joining the Union. However, even in these cases there was no canonical set of standards, nor a transparent and predictable procedure (see Extra and Gorter 2008).⁵ More promising is the approach of the Council of Europe because it adopted two conventions, i.e. the Framework Convention and the Language Charta, that grant 'non-territorial cultural and linguistic autonomy' to national and ethnic groups in traditional multi-ethnic and multilingual areas. The states

4 Personal communication by David Veress, a Hungarian official employed at the town hall of the Szekler town Miercurea Ciuc (Hungarian Csikszereda).

5 The importance of the Language Charter in the field of minority language protection has been recognized by the European Parliament though, which in its Resolution on Regional and Lesser-used Languages (2003) referred to the Charter as the "key Europe-wide legal frame of reference applying in this sphere."

concerned are required to conduct an active policy to preserve, to protect and to develop the identity of traditional minority groups. In this case, traditional minority groups may overcome their 'minority' position without questioning the sovereignty of the states concerned. However, the Council of Europe has no effective sanctioning mechanism when its members violate the conventions they ratified. In order to use the Council of Europe's conventions effectively, the Union should develop mechanisms to support and control the implementations of these conventions. Moreover, because most of the European member states have ratified the Framework Convention and the Language Charter, these Council of Europe's agreements should be adopted by the Union.⁶

Furthermore, a comparative analysis was made of the situation of the Frisian language and education system in the province of Fryslân and the situation of the Hungarian language and education system in one of the Carpathian Basin states with a Hungarian minority, that is Slovakia. The comparison is also justified, because both cases fall under the framework of the Council of Europe. By comparing the situation of European minorities and their languages, we gain more insight into the position and role of the minority languages, we are able to detect earlier and easier deficiencies in the European system and it will be easier to develop strategies and policies to improve the position of the minorities and their languages in a general European system (see Extra and Gorter 2008). Furthermore, the results of comparative analyses help to keep the debates going in the panels where European policy is made.

The Frisian situation and the Hungarian minority situation are in a way complementary. Ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania have the option of receiving education in and of the minority language, both in primary and secondary education. In fact, the Hungarian pupils learn to master all the repertoires of their Hungarian native language, but it is difficult to use the Hungarian language in the official public domain in these states, Hungarian being restricted and discriminated by language laws. In Fryslân, the situation is the other way round. It is perfectly possible to use the Frisian language in all domains of life, Fryslân being recognized as a bilingual Dutch-Frisian province. However, the Frisian education system is still poorly developed for the teaching in and of the minority language, especially in secondary education. Although

6 The countries which oppose to the implementation of both conventions are France, Greece and Belgium only.

Frisians have the unrestricted right to correspond with local and provincial authorities in their native tongue, unlike ethnic Hungarians in Hungary's neighboring states, they hardly do so, for only seventeen percent of the inhabitants of the province have mastered the skills of writing in Frisian. In sum, the comparison of Hungarian and Frisian minorities supports the hypothesis that we receive more insight into the position of European minorities and that these insights can be employed for improving their situation.

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