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THE REALITY OF HUNGARIAN KIN-STATE SUPPORT IN VOJVODINA, SERBIA: A MINORITY PERSPECTIVE

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Dedication:

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Slavica, father Miodrag, sister Isidora and brother Andrej. Without their unconditional love and support, I would not be able to become the first person in my immediate and extended family to finish firstly graduate and now the postgraduate school. Only they know how much effort and everyday sacrifices we all had to take during this journey. Болум вас!

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Abstract:

Hungary is one of the most proactive kin-states in Europe. It has more than 2 million compatriots living in neighbouring countries. With around 250.000 ethnic Hungarians, the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina is no exception. Hungary as a kin-state has its own approach towards its kin-state politics, but that does not necessarily mean that its kin-minority shares the same priorities. The benefits that ethnic Hungarians abroad receive through kin-state support are numerous and go as far as gaining the dual citizenship which provides them with the same, (if not more) rights than Hungarians from Hungary have. Why is that? The non-resident citizenship right is followed by non-resident voting rights which represent a very powerful instrument in the hands of those who know how to use it, for instance, the Hungarian political party Fidesz. However, the specificity of Hungary's kin-state support in Serbia is that the former is an EU state, whilst the latter is moving towards EU membership. Taking into account the existential problems of the minority community, having the opportunity to obtain the EU passport for Vojvodina Hungarians is significant and has led to large scale emigration. The consequences are not only related to the impossibility of long term survival of Hungarians in their historical lands, but also to making lives of the ones who remain even more complicated.

This research will observe the connection between the aim of Hungarian kin-state support and the reality of being a kin-minority in Vojvodina.

Key Words:

Hungary, Serbia, Fidesz, kin-state support, kin-state politics, ethnic kin, national minority, dual citizenship, Status Law, Hungarian National Council, Vojvodina

Acronyms and Abbreviations:

CEE - Central and Eastern Europe

CoE - Council of Europe

EU - European Union

HNC - Hungarian National Council

MÁÉRT - the Hungarian Standing Conference (Magyar Állandó Értekezlet)

MDF - Hungarian Democratic Forum

MM - Hungarian Movement (new Hungarian political party in Serbia)

OPAC - Online public access catalogue

SNS - Serbian Progressive Party (leading political party in Serbia)

UK - United Kingdom

VMDK - Democratic Community of Vojvodina Hungarians (Hungarian political party in Serbia)

VMPD - Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians (Hungarian political party in Serbia)

VMSZ - Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (leading Hungarian political party in Serbia)

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 Research questions	12
1.2 Conceptual framework	15
1.2.1 Conceptualisation: Kin-state support.....	17
1.2.2 Conceptualisation: Kin-minority	21
1.3 Methodology	24
Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	29
2.1 Historical background	29
2.2 Hungarian kin-state activism.....	32
2.2.1 Hungarian kin-state support until 2010	36
2.2.2 Hungarian kin-state support after 2010.....	42
2.3 Political aspects of Hungarian kin-state activism	45
2.4 Hungarian kin-minorities.....	47
2.4.1 Hungarians in Vojvodina.....	50
Chapter 3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH	54
3.1 Findings	54
3.1.1 Hungarian autonomy	55
3.1.2 Political issues.....	58
3.1.3 General minority issues.....	61
3.1.4 Emigration	66
3.2 Discussion.....	68
Chapter 4 CONCLUSIONS.....	72
4.1 The purpose of Hungarian kin-state support	72
4.2 The types of Hungarian kin-state support.....	73
4.3 The main issues of Vojvodina Hungarians.....	74
4.4 Overall conclusion: The reality of Hungarian kin-state support.....	74
4.5 Recommendations	76
Bibliography	77

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

As a result of the post World War I's new geopolitical order and the 1920 Treaty of Trianon's border changes, around 2.8 million ethnic Hungarians found themselves living beyond the new Hungarian state borders (Bessenyei-Williams, 2002). Today, the Hungarian diaspora counts approximately 5 million people, including Hungarians who migrated towards the West in search of a better life and the autochthonous Hungarian communities, living mostly in the neighbouring countries¹. The most noticeable number of Hungarians lives in Romanian Transylvania, Slovak Horné Uhorsko (Upland/Upper Hungary), Serbian Vojvodina and Ukrainian Zakarpattia Oblast (Transcarpathia). The main focus of this research will be Hungarian minority in Serbian Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, where Hungarians with 251,136 people make up 13% of the total population of the province (2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Serbia).

On its way towards becoming a modern and democratic European country, Serbia is obliged to take numerous measures regarding the protection of minority rights, their successful integration, and political participation. According to official census results, the Hungarian minority makes the second largest ethnic group in the country (excluding Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija), right after the Serbian majority. As such, the case of Hungarians serves as a good example for making conclusions about how successful the Serbian minority policy is. Also, it shows the current state of affairs between Serbia and neighbouring Hungary. The central theme of this paper is especially relevant today due to Serbia being in the EU integration process and the power of Hungary as an EU state to slow down this process if their authorities consider that the rights of Hungarians in Serbia are to any extent violated. Currently, the Hungarian government openly supports Serbia's effort to join the EU (*'Hungary supports Serbia's EU membership'*, 2016). According to Serbian president, Aleksandar Vučić, the relationships of two neighbours are the best they have ever been in history (*'Odnosi Srbije i Mađarske najbolji u savremenoj istoriji'*, 2020). This can especially be noticed in very close

¹ Unlike international tendencies, Hungarian state policies as well as the relevant Hungarian literature traditionally make a crucial difference between Hungarian diaspora (created by outward migration) and minority communities (products of border changes).

personal relations between Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán and the Serbian President Vučić.

One whole century passed from the Treaty of Trianon, but the bitter feeling of what can be seen as a historical injustice that was made to a certain degree still exists within the Hungarian nation. Different Hungarian governments came up with various strategies, actions and laws which served to keep Hungarians living abroad closer to the centre, i. e. Budapest. In 2011, State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad published the Strategic Framework in which Hungarian government suggests the fundamental principles of Hungarian kin-state politics: *“Hungary’s kin-state policies reflect that Hungary provides political, moral and financial support for Hungarian institutions and organisations beyond its borders, and establishes direct and active relationships with Hungarians abroad. This support, however, cannot counteract the disadvantages resulting from the economic situation in the neighbouring states but significantly contributes to the improvement of educational opportunities for Hungarians living in those countries, the functioning of civic organisations, and the preservation of cultural traditions”* (Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad, 2011). The main purpose of such activities, according to the Hungarian government, is to primarily secure that the minority rights of their fellow compatriots abroad are being fully respected and that their unique Hungarian culture and language is being preserved properly. However, despite this being the main purpose, it is not the only reason why Budapest cares so much. This paper will try to point out also other features of the state support, which cost Budapest a notable amount of money and may undermine its good relations with the neighbours.

The importance of keeping all Hungarians together led to, inter alia, the creation of the ‘Hungarian Status Law’ in 2001. This rather controversial document faced a lot of criticism (Deets, 2008) and even resulted in the reformulation of the European norm on the legitimacy and limitations of the kin-state activism in various European countries (The protection of national minorities by their kin-state, 2002). These events, nevertheless, did not manage to decrease the level of the Hungarian government’s kin-state activism and already next year, new types of support were introduced. The main privilege that was about to be offered to the ethnic

Hungarians abroad was the simplified process of gaining the dual citizenship (Kis, 2004) which is from the beginning followed by various controversies and issues. Also, its final development in the last decade under the rule of Fidesz, when dual citizenship became a reality, makes room for its abuse from non-Hungarians even today. The central issue of such powerful right is related to the fact that Hungary as a kin-state is an EU member since 2004, and in the Schengen zone since 2007, while Serbia as a home state is still just an EU member candidate country. Therefore, Serbian citizenship holders have a more limited range of rights and benefits in comparison with the Hungarian ones. The question that emerges here and that will be examined throughout this research is related to also political purposes and interests behind such wide Hungarian kin-state support. The main contribution to the knowledge regarding this issue made Myra A. Waterbury's 2010 book *"Between State and Nation: Diaspora Politics and Kin-state Nationalism in Hungary"*.

A constant and direct connection, followed by some sort of dependency on the kin-state usually has a strong, a rather negative impact on these communities' integration and the level of participation in their home state's political and social life. This is especially a case when different levels of economical and social development of their kin and their home state are in place. It further results in noticeable emigration of Hungarians from their historical lands in today's Serbia. This paper will also look at this phenomenon, its causes and consequences. The kin-state support, nevertheless, besides the benefits that Hungarian minority can gain, fails to meet and solve the most dominant problems that these communities face in their day-to-day life and indirectly or directly encourages their emigration. This research will identify the real problems of the Hungarian community in Serbia, seen from their perspective and the reality of what they get versus what they expect from their kin-state's support.

The importance of this research is significant, taking into account the fact that there is a lack of information and literature, especially in English, about the perspective of the actual Hungarian minority in Serbia towards the support that it gets from Budapest. Therefore, this paper will try to indicate and give recommendations regarding what matters to Vojvodina Hungarians and what are the consequences of such wide kin-state support. To do so, a

thorough analysis of different aspects of Hungarian kin-state support is needed and shall be applied to this particular case. The Hungarian kin-state activities are managed by a party that is driven by a considerable political interest from it and by strictly following its agenda, it can deliberately or not, turn a deaf ear to the actual problems of its kin-minority. This paper will hopefully contribute to the field of studying the kin-state activism, seen from the minority perspective, the group of people whose opinion matters the most and because of whom this support exists.

1.1 Research questions

This research aims to identify, analyse, and better understand the background of Hungarian kin-state support and how it affects the life of Hungarians in Vojvodina. Therefore, the following research questions need to be analysed:

- A. What is the purpose of Hungarian kin-state support?
- B. What are the types of kin-state support that are offered to Vojvodina Hungarians?
- C. What are the main problems that the Hungarian minority in Serbia face?
- D. What is the reality of such wide kin-state support?

The listed questions consist of a variety of sub-questions and facts that are crucial in reaching the aim of this research which is to draw attention to the reality of Hungarian kin-state support.

- A. What is the purpose of Hungarian kin-state support?

To understand the whole issue better, it is necessary to explain the concept of kin-state support/kin-state activism and put it in the context of the Central and Eastern European region, more specifically, Hungary and Serbia. The complexity of this concept lays in both, historical and

contemporary needs for justice and power gaining. Some of the elements of such support are well-known and public, while others need more in-depth analysis. What are the 'hidden' interests of the Hungarian ruling party when it comes to their wide support towards minorities? A review of relevant literature is essential in defining this concept, its elements and as a final result - its purpose. The purpose will serve as a starting point and necessary link later for better understanding of the outcome of kin-state support in Vojvodina.

B. What are the types of kin-state support that are offered to Vojvodina Hungarians?

Identification of different types of Hungarian kin-state support is helping to get an overview of all the benefits that Hungarian minority get by birth, by their ethnic belonging, especially beyond the Hungarian state borders. How far can this support go? How does it influence their everyday lives? Are some of the benefits even greater than the ones that Hungarians in Hungary have? Are there any long term consequences? The matter of gaining Hungarian and by default the EU citizenship so easily, as the highest level of support is also the main subject of abuse by some non-Hungarians. This issue shows another side of the medal and it needs to be examined.

C. What are the main problems that the Hungarian minority in Serbia face?

The main institution that protects the rights of Hungarians in Serbia is the Hungarian National Council. But, people sometimes have the wrong image of their actual competence. One of the roles of the Hungarian National Council is to preserve the Hungarian culture in Serbia and ease the coexistence with their Serbian neighbours. Is this supposedly independent body compromised by the political interests? How this affects the lives of the national minority? Are the main problems of Hungarian communities in Serbia the same as the problems of the general population? What is a specific of those Serbian Hungarians who do not speak the Serbian language well enough? Many people consider emigration as an ultimate solution for all the problems. But, what causes such a life-changing decision?

D. What is the reality of such wide kin-state support?

Hungarians in Serbia live very compactly and represent an absolute or relative majority in several municipalities. Also, they are very well organised and tend to stay close. This homogeneity, however, has its issues. What does the Serbian state do wrong in addressing these issues? There is a considerable difference between what the state of Hungary offers as a support and what the Hungarian minority in Serbia needs. The necessity for more study on the latter one is the reason why this research is so valuable. Bearing in mind how important is the minority opinion on the ground, the answer to this research question will stress how significant can be the consequences of not understanding the reality on time. Also, an overview of the reality will answer how successful kin-state support is, in general.

Getting the answers to these research questions not only helps in reaching the aim of this research but also represents a crucial element of the objectives of it. The objectives are as follow:

- Collecting and analysing the information on kin-state activism, understanding the reasons and purpose of it; putting the kin-state activism in the context of Hungary.
- Using the raw data to depict the actual reality of human experience on the ground; defining and pointing out the importance of the research problem.
- Reaching the aim of the research by answering the research questions, using the already existing literature and the raw, primary data.
- Analysing the data to make conclusions and recommendations, necessary for solving the research problem.

For this research, the interpretive approach will be used. Scholars supporting interpretivism consider the reality to be multiple and relative (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Another characteristic of this approach is that *“the knowledge acquired in this discipline is socially constructed rather than objectively determined”* (Carson, David et al., 2001, p. 5). The structural framework is more flexible, while the goal of such approach is *“to understand and interpret the meanings in human behaviour rather than to generalize and predict causes and effects”* (Edirisingha, 2012, p. 1). Therefore, this paper will try to extend the knowledge by

understanding the issue/phenomenon, making conclusions and recommendations; rather than offer the single external reality, as in positivist research approach.

1.2 Conceptual framework

Defining the diverse segments of Hungarian kin-state support in Serbia is one of the central tasks of this paper. Several factors influence the kin-state support and what effect will it have towards the 'object', that is the Hungarian minority and its issues. This research will measure if the kin-state support, with all its features, is capable of solving the main problems of the Hungarian minority in Serbia. The variable 'kin-state support' as part of wider 'kin-state activism' and 'kin-state politics' concepts, in case of this study, will cover all the means used by the government in Budapest to protect the rights of Hungarians from Vojvodina and keep them closer to their 'ethnic' homeland. An important focus will be on the political component of this support.

This research will be focusing on a single case study - the reality and the outcome of the actions of the Hungarian government towards the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina and their actual issues. From this case, several variables can be obtained. Primarily, an independent variable would be:

- IV: The (Hungarian) kin-state support

This variable will be examined and the concept of kin-state support will be defined by secondary sources. The specificity of Hungarian kin-state support or activism will also be examined within the literature review of this research. A dependent variable is:

- DV: The (Vojvodina Hungarian) minority

The dependent variable will be examined and the concept of the national minority will be explained by secondary sources. The example of Vojvodina Hungarians as a national

minority will be explored by secondary data analysis within the literature review chapter and primary data analysis within the empirical research chapter of this paper. Many supplementary variables are necessary for a better understanding of the connection and correlation between the independent and dependent variables. The supplementary variables linked to the independent variable are:

- SV1: The purpose of Hungarian kin-state support
- SV2: The political interest of kin-state

All of the supplementary variables mentioned above will be examined in more detail in the literature review. Another set of supplementary variables are related to the dependent variable and they are:

- SV3: The (Vojvodina Hungarian) minority issues
- SV4: The outcome of Hungarian kin-state support

Two listed supplementary variables will also be studied as part of the empirical segment of this research and they are the ones defining the dependent variable. All six variables mentioned playing an important role in this research. Also, they are crucial for deriving the hypotheses. The suggested hypotheses are as follows:

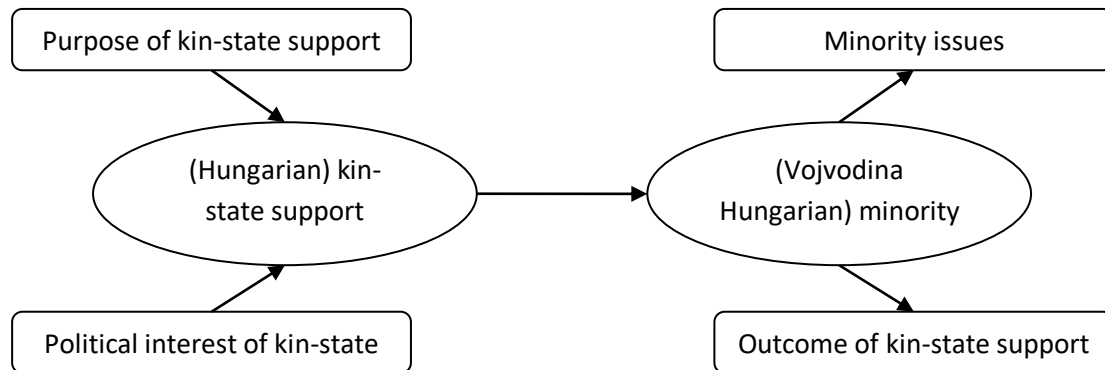
H1: The more the kin-state support focuses on political interests, the more of actual issues of (Vojvodina Hungarian) minority are unsolved.

H2: The more issues a minority faces in the home country, the more support it expects from kin-state.

H3: The more the minority relies on and uses the support of a kin-state, the more likely is to be caught in the middle between the kin-state and home state.

H4: The more privileges kin-state support offers to its minority in another country, the more is the minority encouraged to leave the home state.

The further empirical research will approve, disapprove or adjust the suggested hypotheses. This research study will be factor oriented and its arrow diagram would look as follows:



The type of a case study that is sought to be delivered in this paper is closest to Hypothesis-generating study. This type of study is a standard case study and involves collecting primary data from research participants concerning a certain phenomenon, in this case, the Hungarian kin-state support and then using what has been said as a tool to develop justified hypotheses. The principal that is characteristic for this study is questioning rather than measuring, which will be the case with this particular research as well. Also, such a study could be followed up with other, greater-N studies. In this single case study, a larger-N study can be developed towards the other countries in the region with a notable Hungarian population, e. g. Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine. The differences in each case also can be found in each country's relationship with the EU and Schengen zone. Slovakia is part of both, Romania is only an EU member and Ukraine is not part of any. Therefore, all of these single cases can become a part of some future research.

1.2.1 Conceptualisation: Kin-state support

The main concept that can be derived and that is relevant for this study is the (Hungarian) kin-state support. This concept will be examined and explained primarily by

secondary sources from already existing literature, while the empirical chapter of this paper will further contribute to the field by exploring this concept in the case of Vojvodina Hungarians. There are several definitions regarding the 'kin-state politics' and 'kin-state activism', where the phenomenon of Hungarian kin-state support fits in. This paper will select the applicable data and information and define the concept and the particular phenomenon as precisely as possible, considering the lack of theoretical background. The scholars and analysts focus more on the practical implications of kin-state activism in general than on its theoretical aspects.

Firstly, the term 'kin-state'² should be looked at and how Hungary fits in. Singh explains broadly the term 'kin-state' as a country that usually borders or is very close to the region where a significant population of its co-nationals lives. Kin-states actively preserve shared ethnocultural and ethnoreligious ties with their ethnic kin across the state borders (Singh, 2006). Palermo argues that it is acceptable for a kin-state to be interested in their ethnic kin abroad and to take action towards improving the community's status and general well-being. The ethnic kin of a certain kin-state is a community that has the same defining elements that also define the kin-state majority population, such as common language, ethnicity and religion (Palermo & Sabanadze, 2011). The kin-state activities as such do not have any particular legally defined limits, except for general ones such as respect of territorial integrity and good neighbouring relations (Sabanadze, 2006).

The concept 'kin-state support' in this case is part of 'kin-state politics' and 'kin-state activism' definitions and represents nothing else than a form, main type or even a synonym of the latter two, according to the literature. The definition of kin-state activism or kin-state politics, with special attention to the Hungarian one, was developed in various works of Myra A. Waterbury (2010; 2014; 2020), Szabolcs Pogonyi (2011; 2015; 2017), as well as, Zoltán Kántor (2004) and Zsuzsa Csergő and James Goldgeier (2013), etc. Several definitions of kin-state politics could be drawn³ and they describe this concept as follows: *"kin-state politics cover actions to engage and protect the so-called ethnic kin communities in neighbouring or nearby*

² Synonyms used in this paper: Hungarian government; Budapest.

³ Some of them are very closely related to ethnic politics.

states” (Waterbury, 2014, p. 36). Waterbury also groups kin-state politics’ actions as: *“political-legal (legal and diplomatic advocacy), economic (launching financial aid or other business oriented programme), cultural (establishment and funding of kin community educational, cultural, etc. institutions, scholarship programme) and symbolic (the inclusion of co-ethnics e.g. by offering citizenship)”* (Tátrai, Erőss, & Kovály, 2017, p. 204).

There are, however, also other definitions, according to which kin-state politics’ main role is to serve as a grant of a fast-track non-resident or external ethnic citizenship of a kin-state country. For instance, Hungarian kin-state support went so far in its offers to ethnic kin that it grants full kin-state citizenship to ethnic Hungarians who do not reside, and never resided in the kin-state. This particular form of ethnic citizenship is seen by many as controversial since it can represent a threat to the territorial sovereignty of the countries where these non-resident citizens live⁴ (Kovács E., 2017). Additionally, it is opposite to common understandings of popular sovereignty, by which all citizens are linked to one another and home state by their civic rights and not their ethnic affinity (Pogonyi, 2011).

The general kin-state politics target two main groups: transborder ethnic communities and ethnic diasporas. Transborder ethnic groups emerged as a result of border shifts⁵, so these communities became minorities within newly formed state borders due to geopolitical changes and not because they wanted it (Pogonyi, 2011). Ethnic diasporas, on the other hand, represent a group of people who consciously migrated due to economic or security reasons and they usually live far from their home country⁶. As such, kin-state politics involve three parties: the home state, the kin-state, and most importantly, the minority group that is in the middle between the two⁷ (Brubaker, 1996). The kin-state support that is subject of this paper is only related to transborder ethnic groups.

Sabanadze suggests the typology of kin-state activism. According to her, there are three dominant types of kin-state activism: a) nationalist, b) geopolitical and c) normative.

⁴ e.g. Romania and Slovakia opposed the law, claiming that it violates their territorial sovereignty.

⁵ e.g. Poland, Hungary, Germany.

⁶ e.g. Armenian, ex-Yugoslav or Turkish diasporas in Western Europe.

⁷ See Brubaker’s triadic nexus, field’s most famous model for studying the national questions in CEE.

A) Nationalist type is when a kin-state includes kin-minorities in their national building process. In this case, kin-state politics are equally shaped by ethnic kin issues and internal political discussion. An example of nationalist kin-state is Hungary;

B) Geopolitical type of kin-state activism implies that kin-state uses kin-minorities in another state for its geopolitical interests. The kin-state's influence on ethnic kin serves as a tool for pressure on ethnic kin's home state. An example given is Russia and the concerns of its political standing and securing the regional influence;

C) Normative type is the least problematic type and it refers to kin-state politics which support a co-operation between respective institutions of kin and host state. Normative kin-state politics aim to respect and improve minority rights. The examples are Austria's and Italy's actions in the South Tyrol region (Sabanadze, 2006).

Kin-state politics aim to provide the ethnic kin abroad with the moral, political and financial support, to contribute to its nation-building and engage in the issue of minority's 'self-perception' (Kántor, 2006). Also, kin-state politics serve to advocate the proactive cross-border interaction, and ultimately to allow the ethnic kin to move to the kin-state, or just gain the citizenship and external voting rights (Csergő & Deegan-Krause, 2011). Kin-state politics include all kin-state's projects, programmes, activities, and the nature of the relationship with its kin-minority. Kin-state politics represent a mixture of political (dual citizenship, external voting rights, representation), financial/economical (grants offered to kin-minority) and cultural/educational (preservation of language and culture) means of support. An elementary aim of kin-state support represents the protection of minority language rights. The importance of protecting the mother tongue of the minority communities is recognised internationally and by the EU and it represents a fundamental human right (Kapitány, 2015). Further analysis of primary data of this research will test this idea and how applicable it is in the case of Vojvodina Hungarians.

The studies on 'kin-state politics' answer why, how, and how much kin-states engage with their ethnic kin abroad. Also, it focuses on defining the possible consequences of kin-state

activities⁸. The kin-state politics' activities tend to have a very strong impact on domestic and international affairs, and as such is a very important field of study. According to Myra A. Waterbury, there are few groups of studies that are related to kin-state politics:

a) external state support for rebellious minorities and their movements in civil wars and secessionists in their fights for control, autonomy, or independence;

b) the protection of native language rights as an aspect of kin-state support;

c) the externalization of identity and the right to dual citizenship.

Nevertheless, kin-state politics is a concept that could be identified with broader studies of irredentism and diaspora politics, or even minority rights and identity, since it can represent one of the subjects of listed theories. (Waterbury, 2020)

1.2.2 Conceptualisation: Kin-minority

The concept of kin-minority merges the concepts of national minority and diaspora, since the former studies the position of kin-minority in its home state, while the latter analyses its relation to kin-state. The universal formulation of what a 'minority' represents does not exist, due to many differences and unique features of every single case. Because of this, every country creates its politics and approach to defining, recognising, and dealing with a minority group (Porter, 2003). Nevertheless, Francesco Capotorti, Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities suggested a definition in which a minority was described as: *"A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members - being nationals of the State - possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language"* (Capotorti, 1979, p. 96).

⁸ The activities taken by kin-states on behalf of their ethnic kin in other countries.

On the other hand, the literature recognises two major groups of minorities: 'old' or 'autochthonous' and 'new' minorities⁹. The distinction is related to how long a minority has been living in a certain territory; if it became a minority due to historical reasons or consciously. This paper focuses further only on autochthonous minority communities and their engagement with kin-state. When defining the minority, the right categorisation of it, led by the home state plays a very important role, because it can be influenced by political interests. The way the home state defines the minority and what is more important, who belongs to it, is key for a minority community's cultural development. This recognition by the home state gives to a certain minority group or individual the access to resources given by the home state or kin-state. The rights and resources granted to the minority groups are directly dependent on how the home state measures and defines the minority and who can declare to be part of one (Dembinska, Máracz, & Tonk, 2014).

Will Kymlicka suggests a definition of a minority that is relevant for this study and defines them as a *"distinct and potentially self-governing societies incorporated into a larger state"* (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 19). Kymlicka also argues that despite missing the universal definition of a national minority, two main criteria characterize a national minority - the objective and subjective one. He describes them as: *"The objective criterion is the empirical presence of a distinct societal culture in the form of a common language, religion and ethnicity. The subjective criterion requires that the national minority think of themselves as collectively possessing a separate identity that they wish to preserve"* (Galenkamp, 1996, p. 42).

Zoltán Kántor argues that members of the national minority have a unique perception of their belonging. They do consider themselves to be the part of one nation with the kin-state's majority nation, due to the common language, culture, history and ethnicity. But, they are still aware of their position and status of a national minority in another country, usually neighbouring country. When these two perceptions are put together, they can define what a national (kin) minority is (Kántor, 2006, p. 159).

⁹ However, in many cases, this distinction has been increasingly challenged, since one can hardly make a clear-cut boundary between these two types of communities: 'new' groups have managed to gain official recognition as 'old' minorities (Czech Republic) or there are 'new' layers within the 'old' groups (Hungary), etc.

One of the most relevant definitions of a minority is given by Rogers Brubaker. He suggests that a minority is *“not simply a ‘group’ that is given by the facts of ethnic demography. It is a dynamic political stance, or, more precisely, a family of related yet mutually competing stances, not a static ethno demographic condition. Three elements are characteristic of this political stance, or family of stances: (1) the public claim to membership of an ethno cultural nation different from the numerically or politically dominant ethno cultural nation; (2) the demand for state recognition of this distinct ethno cultural nationality; and (3) the assertion, on the basis of this ethno cultural nationality, of certain collective cultural or political rights”* (Brubaker, 1996, p. 60). The majority of articles on national minority refer to the Brubaker’s definitions, so his contribution to the field is irreplaceable.

Some national minorities do not have their kin-state to get the support from, so not every national minority can be defined as a kin-minority¹⁰. What is common for the CEE region is that it has a rich history of kin-state activism and many minority groups have a status of kin-minorities. This is a result of border changes, different regimes collapse, and unions’ dissolutions in the 20th century, which led to intensive nation-building activities. The significant number of kin-minorities exists in CEE kin-states neighbouring countries and they usually need to keep the balance between their kin and host state (Kovács E. , 2020).

One of the pioneers in the area of conceptualising used the example of family ties to describe the kin-minorities. According to him, kin-minorities can be seen as ethnic ‘relatives’ of the kin-state (Walzer, 1983). On the other hand, Waterbury uses the term kin-minority to indicate the group of national minorities that were created due to the major geopolitical events of 20th century - The World Wars and the fall of communism (Waterbury, 2010, p. 18). Authors as Wolff use the term ‘external minorities’ to explain the kin-minorities. He describes kin-minorities as *“minorities that, while living on the territory of one state (host-state) ¹¹ are ethnically akin to the titular nation of another, often neighbouring, state (kin-state)”* (Wolff, 2002, p. 3).

¹⁰ Synonym used in this paper: Ethnic kin.

¹¹ The term ‘host state’ is a synonym for a ‘home state’ and it is equally used in the literature.

1.3 Methodology

The second chapter of this research 'Literature review' will consist of the theoretical research, which represents an indispensable tool needed for defining the phenomenon of kin-state activism, providing a historical background of Hungarian kin-state support and finally narrow it down to the Vojvodina Hungarian's case. It is necessary to better understand the purpose and hidden motives around the phenomenon, which are crucial when comparing it with the outcomes of kin-state activism, perceived by the minority itself. The first two research questions will be answered by using the reviewed literature. The chapter will be structured in the following thematic units:

- Historical background, Hungarian nation concept
- Hungarian kin-state support, before and after 2010
- The political aspect of Hungarian kin-state activism
- Hungarian kin-minorities

Besides the literature written or officially translated into English, the theoretical part of this research will also contain small elements gained from reports, articles, interviews and news sources originally written in Serbian. The literature review will consist of secondary data sets, which will be reviewed initially using libraries of the University of Glasgow and Institute for Minority Studies, Centre for Social Sciences of Hungarian Academy of Sciences (3rd mobility placement), by using the general sources of information, e. g. the web search engines, the OPAC system, academic abstracts, bibliographic databases, etc.

At the end of the second chapter, an introduction to the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina will be made, using secondary sources. Having an introduction as this is important since it gives all the necessary information and the overall picture of the Hungarian minority in Serbia. It will contain the information on their numbers, how well are they represented in the Serbian political and social life and what are the main institutes and elements of their protection. This knowledge is needed for a better understanding of the empirical data that follows it in the next chapter.

The third chapter is dedicated to empirical research. This data collection and sampling serves to test present-day practice over the historical record.

The primary source data that will be used and analysed to accomplish the aims and objectives are the qualitative, unused interview materials received from still unpublished research of this paper's supervisor and University of Glasgow professor, David Smith. The title of the research is *"National Minority Rights & Democratic Political Community: Practices of Non-territorial Cultural Autonomy in Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe"*. The access to this dataset was arranged through the UK Data Service. The raw data relevant for this particular paper are transcripts of in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Smith, 2020) conducted by Professor Smith and his team between 2014 and 2017. The set of primary data that will be used is only the one regarding the Hungarians in Serbia. The interviews cover the opinions of representatives of minority cultural autonomy bodies, such as Hungarian National Council; representatives of leading Hungarian political parties in Serbia, state officials involved in the design and implementation of minority policy, members of the Parliament and academic experts working on issues of cultural autonomy and minority rights. All of the interviews were initially requested with key individuals and institutions, with a snowballing method that was used to identify other relevant contacts, once the fieldwork started. The fieldwork in Serbia lasted from 13 until 19 May 2016.

For this type of research, when the perspective of a certain social group is observed, the qualitative data has an advantage over the quantitative. Hence, this research is qualitative. The decision to use the transcripts mentioned above lays in the fact that they are the only interviews that were conducted among Hungarians in Vojvodina and provide the most realistic, direct, and up-to-date information regarding the wide range of issues that the Hungarian minority face. The only similar researches that conducted interviews among Hungarians in Serbia and were published recently are Lendák-Kabók & Lendák's *"Language barrier faced by Hungarian women students and teaching staff in the higher education system in Serbia"* and Pogonyi's *"The passport as means of identity management: making and unmaking ethnic boundaries through citizenship"*. They indeed cover the issues relevant to the kin-state support,

such as the language use (Lendák-Kabók & Lendák, 2017) and dual citizenship (Pogonyi, 2019), however, they are very specific and cannot be used for creating a wider picture on the multiple issues of the Hungarian community in Vojvodina.

Certain minor limitations were identified and they are mostly related to a slight mismatch between the main topic of David Smith's research, i.e. cultural autonomy; and this particular research. The most questions that were addressed do not directly give the answers on Hungarian kin-state support, but the thorough analysis of the responses give all the information necessary for answering the research questions and reaching the aims of this research. The experts' responses, directly and indirectly, mention Hungarian kin-state support on numerous occasions, although without always naming it as such. That is why the theoretical part of this research which applies the concept of kin-state politics to the Hungarian case and analyses the types of kin-state support, plays a significant role as a starting point for the further analysis.

The total of 12 interviewees will be classified into three groups: Political party representatives (4), Hungarian National Council representatives (6), and Vojvodina Provincial officials (2). Therefore, there are three sets of questions. Each set of questions is made according to the function they occupy. This will help to identify the differences and similarities in perspectives towards the same issues. In the case of political party representatives, the interviews were conducted among the representatives of four different political parties, which have opposing opinions and different levels of relationship with political fractions in Hungary and Serbia. Among the party representatives, the former or current members of the Serbian Parliament can be found. This is a very important segment of this research since it will not give a unanimous, somewhat subjective elite perspective, but rather a more realistic. The same is the case with Hungarian Council Representatives, where interviewees are both, political activists and civilians who were selected to represent and protect rights of Serbian Hungarians.

The questions that are relevant to this particular research and that were asked among the others are as follow:

Relevant questions to the political party representatives	
Q 1.1:	'Does Hungary support HNC directly or indirectly now? If yes, how?'
Q 1.2:	'What do you think about granting Hungarian citizenship to minorities?'
Q 1.3:	'Does it raise the danger that those with Hungarian citizenship will seek to migrate to other EU countries?'
Q 1.4:	'Will this undermine the position/future of Hungarian minorities in the region?'

Relevant questions to the representatives of the Hungarian National Council	
Q 2.1:	'What are the HNC's main activities/programs?'
Q 2.2:	'What are the main issues/challenges facing the community?'
Q 2.3:	'How much funding does the council receive and from whom?'
Q 2.4:	'How would you describe the relationship between HNC and local and state authorities?'
Q 2.5:	'How is Hungarians' relation with kin-state? Do they support financially HNC directly or indirectly?'
Q 2.6:	'What do you think how important is HNC for minority/nationality groups' life?'

Relevant questions to Vojvodina Provincial officials	
Q 3.1:	'What do you think about granting the Hungarian citizenship to Serbian citizens who can prove to have Hungarian ancestors, does it not raise the danger to migrate or cause other issues in the area?'
Q 3.2:	'What can you do about the general problems minority citizens have? What can you do when they come to you?'

The responses on listed questions, as well as the ones that came up as a result of questions about the Non-Territorial Cultural Autonomy (not listed above), are essential for answering the final two research questions, making conclusions and giving recommendations. The expert interviewees provided responses on the condition of anonymity. Accordingly, they will be referred to as follows:

Nº	Codename	Function	Place	Date
1	SERB-1.1.1	Political party representative (VMSZ); member of the Serbian Parliament	Subotica, Serbia	19 May 2016
2	SERB-1.1.2	Political party representative (MM); former member of the Serbian Parliament	Subotica, Serbia	17 May 2016
3	SERB-1.2.1	Political party representative (VMDK)	Ada, Serbia	18 May 2016
4	SERB-1.3.1	Political party representative (VMDP)	Temerin, Serbia	18 May 2016
5	SERB-2.1.1	Member of Hungarian National Council	Subotica, Serbia	May 2016 (no exact date provided)
6	SERB-2.1.2	Member of Hungarian National Council	Subotica, Serbia	17 May 2016
7	SERB-2.1.3	Member of Hungarian National Council	Subotica, Serbia	19 May 2016
8	SERB-2.1.4	Member of Hungarian National Council	Subotica, Serbia	16 May 2016
9	SERB-2.2.1	Member of Hungarian National Council	Bačka Topola, Serbia	17 May, 2016
10	SERB-2.3.1	Member of Hungarian National Council	Bečej, Serbia	May 2016 (no exact date provided)
11	SERB-3.1.1	Vojvodina Provincial Official	Novi Sad, Serbia	13 May 2016
12	SERB-3.1.2	Vojvodina Provincial Official	Novi Sad, Serbia	13 May 2016

The analysis of the findings allowed the categorising of the responses, which identified recurring themes, patterns and issues. The final, fourth chapter of this research will provide overall conclusions and recommendations for solving each set of issues.

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Historical background

On the way towards a better understanding of the contemporary Hungarian kin-state activism, it is necessary to go a few steps back and look at the nature and development of Hungarian nationalism first. The government policy related to the protection of Hungarians abroad is based on the concept of the nation; therefore it is very important to understand the complexity of the Hungarian nation concept. The first thing that is evident about Hungarians is their unique language, history and ancestry. While other countries in Europe usually neighbour nations that share deep historical and language roots with, this is not the case with Hungary. The Hungarian case is also unique because Hungary as a state is ethnically very homogeneous, but it has a large number of ethnic kin living in neighbouring countries. This is a result of 1920 Treaty of Trianon, which followed the end of World War I and left around 2.8 million ethnic Hungarians living outside the Hungarian state borders (Bessenyei-Williams, 2002) today, mostly in Romania (Transylvania), Slovakia (Horné Uhorsko), Serbia (Vojvodina) and Ukraine (Zakarpattia Oblast). This historical event is one of the reasons why kin-state activism plays a special role in Hungarian politics.

The Hungarian nationalism has roots that go far back in time, way before the Treaty of Trianon. For instance, under the Habsburg Empire, Hungary did not have the status of a sovereign state and had to fight for its place and the recognition of language and culture (Egedy, 2013). What is characteristic of this period, according to Myra A. Waterbury, is that Hungarian national identity *“was not defined primarily in ethnic or culturo-linguistic terms, nor was a unified, contiguous Hungarian nation-state long in the making by the time state and nation were split in two. Until the later decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, Hungarian nationalism was more political than culturo-linguistic, more territorial than ethnic, and driven more by the political calculations of the ruling noble classes than by the bonds of ethnic affiliation”* (Waterbury, 2010, p. 26). Today, Hungarians from neighbouring countries have a right to their language and culture but do not have the level of

autonomy that is desired and has been a declared goal of Hungary's foreign policy and the new constitution (Egry, 2014). That is why the fight for wider rights and autonomy can be seen through the Budapest's kin-state activism today.

The Treaty of Trianon served as a 'trigger' that increased the level of nationalism and it is connected with the Hungarian kin-state activism that we know today. The loss of two-thirds of the territory left trauma to Hungarians and in years that followed the revision of the treaty and regaining of the lost territories represented one of the biggest political goals of the Hungarian governments. Usually, the concept of a common culture of the nation was used as a tool to promote membership in the nation. Authors as Bárdi suggest eight periods of Hungarian national policy starting with the post World War I period and ending up with passing the Status Law in the early 2000s (Bárdi, 2004). Another period that could be added today would refer to the last decade, the rule of Fidesz, and the new constitution of 2011. The new kin-state policy is in place since and it is based on nation-building across the borders, as well as a new level of relations with the ethnic kin, who now has a right to participate in political decisions in Hungary and broader EU by voting at EP elections; and can obtain the dual citizenship.

The political situation in Central and Eastern Europe, more than 30 years after the fall of communism and more than 15 years after some of the countries joined the EU (and by default passed the test on the level of democracy), still seems very intense and it is subject for many debates. The populism and some sort of neo-nationalism are on the rise, so the phenomenon of kin-state activism came to focus in recent years. This is especially the case in CEE region, where countries still tend to engage in transnational national building and seek to reconstruct the feeling of national belonging, which was lost due to many years under the communist rule. A certain revival of ethnic identity occurred as 'new' countries rediscovered their ethnic roots. One of the strategies that were common in the post-communist period was related to the reconstruction of narratives about the nation and strengthening the ethnic identity via the inclusion of ethnic kin from abroad in the nation (Brubaker, 1996). The works of Rogers Brubaker are significant for a better understanding of 'nationalizing' states and the reformulating of the concept of nationalism in the 1990s.

The scholars agree that the regime change in CEE countries brought the redefinition of nation concept, which now also includes the ethnic kin living outside the country. Culic argues that the breakdown of authoritarian regimes is followed by the increased interest of politics to deal with the issue of the nation, laws on citizenship, and definitions of a nation in the constitution. All of this legislation is referred to as assertive nationalism (Culic, 2003). If compared with the current situation in Hungary and its kin-state politics, it can be seen that the Fundamental Law of Hungary of 2011¹² does exactly that.

The specificity of Central and Eastern Europe is that many nations, how we know them today, were formed after the empires and later communist federations collapsed and many national groups suddenly became national minorities in the newly formed states¹³. Minorities, as well as their kin-states, engaged in nation-building also, by formulating the political goals along with the cultural ones. This means that they required the creation of their institutional network, which helped and still helps in creating and preserving their ethnic identity. Also, they had to ensure their political representation, by transforming the internal politics of their home state. (Kántor, 2004)

It seems that in post-communist CEE, nationalism represents one of the main principles of nation-building, the ideal of the nation is very important and its significance does not decrease. It modifies over time, but it remains an important principle. The politics related to the nationalism are oriented towards building up strong ties with titular or majority nation and usually promoting, to a certain extent, unfriendly politics towards the national minorities (Kántor, 2006).

Will Kymlicka argues, what is characteristic for Hungarian neighbours, where Hungarian minorities live, is that most of them became new nation-states in the 1990s and were going through the intensive process of nation-building. When such a process exists, the nationalism rises to the surface and represents a major challenge to national minorities. In such societies,

¹² Republic of Hungary Constitution.

¹³ All the neighbouring countries with considerable Hungarian population, with the exception of Romania, were part of communist federations of Yugoslavia (Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia), USSR (Ukraine) or Czechoslovakia (Slovakia).

the promotion of majority culture and language is dominant, so the titular nation is not obliged to prevent the assimilation of minorities (Kymlicka, 1995). Adding to that, the years during the communist regime also did not do anything positive concerning preserving national identities. On the contrary, the pressure of assimilation was very high, and back then was not possible for Hungarians to turn to their kin-state and ask for help. And in Budapest, under János Kádár's communism, a nationalist policy was not pursued and many generations of Hungarians were not even aware of their compatriots in neighbouring states. Thus, it is understandable why Hungarian governments in recent history are still so interested in keeping their minority closer to the centre - Budapest.

Schöpflin wrote that all of the events that had some sort of 'anti-Hungarian' edge in the last century were expected to be met with inertia, passivity, and resulting in Hungarians accepting their fate. But, Hungarian minorities were still identifying themselves with the Hungarian state and were constantly looking towards its direction. The only detachment that Hungarians abroad faced was related to their Hungarian political identity (Schöpflin, 2006). However, the political situation changed after 1989 and especially when Fidesz came to power for the first time in 1998 and the Hungarian political identity in neighbouring countries was 'revived'. Today, after 10 years of renewed political dominance of Fidesz¹⁴, Orbán enjoys wide support of Hungarians abroad, who are now included in the Hungarian state's internal political decision making.

2.2 Hungarian kin-state activism

The literature on kin-state politics agrees that the Hungarian state represents one of the most active and dynamic kin-states in the CEE region. This is not a surprise, taking into account that at the moment around 2.2 million ethnic Hungarians live in the countries neighbouring Hungary and represent their ethnic kin abroad (Kapitány, 2015). Due to such a large number of ethnic kin living along the state borders, Hungary represents an extraordinary case in the centre

¹⁴ Came back to power in 2010.

of Europe. Such complex kin-state politics have been a significant factor of general Hungarian domestic and foreign politics in the last decades, and indirectly the matter of the neighbouring countries where Hungarian minority communities live.

Besides the studies under which Hungarian kin-state politics could be examined and that are suggested earlier by Waterbury¹⁵, the phenomenon of kin-state activism and actions which serve to unify the nation no matter where it lives is usually studied under theories of trans-sovereign and transnational nationalism. The significant contributions to these two theories are the works of Csergő and Goldgeier, Pogonyi and Egedy. In their works, they use Hungary as an example.

Csergő and Goldgeier explain that trans-sovereign nationalism *“applies to nations that reach beyond current state boundaries but forgo the idea of border changes, primarily because it is too costly to pursue border changes in contemporary Europe”* (Csergő & Goldgeier, 2004, p. 26). Furthermore, they suggest that trans-sovereign nationalism advocates that political organisation across the border could be created by the centre, which is kin-state. Since it is not so common to engage in territorial changes today or to promote the repatriation of ethnic Hungarians, it is more realistic for the centre to create institutions and actively maintain the ethnic kin across the border. This is a strategy that has been adopted by Budapest. Also, it is important to emphasise that a certain form of repatriation exists and this research will try to look at it. Myra A. Waterbury writes about it, labelling it as a new policy that emerged, which focuses on the rights of ethnic kin and institutionalisation of their ties with the political centre via granting the citizenship (Waterbury, 2009).

Pogonyi, who writes about the transnational nationalism, describes the current Hungarian government’s strategy regarding the ethnic kin. Pogonyi says that transborder or transnational nationalism that follows the diaspora politics does not necessarily mean a return to the ideas of nationalism in which national and political borders should correspond. The author compares Orbán’s government rhetoric with revisionists’ or irredentists’ ideas of the

¹⁵ Irredentism, diaspora politics, minority rights and identity. Explained in subchapter 1.2.1 of this paper.

interwar period and argues that this centre-right government does not have such tendency, but rather keeps the pragmatism in inter-state relations. As an example, the author uses the case of certain Hungarian parties in Romania and Slovakia, which enjoy Hungary's external support and because of that they became more demanding concerning the minority claims-making. However, this Hungarian government's external support does not lead to any conflict or ethnic violence (Pogonyi, 2017).

The fight for the interests of ethnic kin is closely related to the general politics of Orbán's party. During the first mandate of Fidesz 1998-2002, there were the attempts to institutionalise relations to the ethnic kin, by passing the Status Law in 2001. This Law was followed by resentment from neighbouring countries and the EU institutions in general. While in 2010, when the Hungarian government supported dual citizenship, a serious reaction was missing¹⁶. Dual citizenship became the norm in most CEE countries by 2010, since the kin-states started using dual citizenship with non-resident voting rights as an instrument for nation-building across the borders (Pogonyi, 2017).

Pogonyi describes different cases when kin-state offers citizenship to ethnic kin. First one is in case of external minority protection. Another case is when the geopolitical considerations are the reason number one for reaching out to ethnic kin communities. The reasons for kin-states to institutionalise and formalize diaspora and transborder relations are due to potential economic benefits and what is even more important, gaining political support from the external population. Political parties of CEE that advocate kin-state support rely on diaspora votes and that their actions will pay off at the election. That is the reason behind the decision to offer voting rights as part of extraterritorial citizenship (Pogonyi, 2017, p. 30). Although the kin-states benefit politically, their engagement does not bring any economic benefits. The resources and funding that is addressed towards the Hungarian minorities are unidirectional, it is used mostly for maintaining the unique language and culture in neighbouring states, so there is not any direct economic return (Pogonyi, 2017, p. 112).

¹⁶ Except for Slovakia, where the new citizenship law was voted and required renunciation of Slovak citizenship if one applies for a second nationality.

The majority of ethnic Hungarians that live abroad eagerly welcomed the opportunity to gain dual citizenship, since they do feel part of the ethnocultural Hungarian nation. But, primarily the Hungarian passport serves as a getaway to the EU labour market (Pogonyi, 2019), and visa free entry to various Western countries, e.g. the USA. This is especially the case with the citizens from non-EU (Serbia, Ukraine) and non-Schengen countries (Romania). Numerous literature resources examine the question of Hungarian dual citizenship from 2010 onwards (Korhecz, 2011) (Pogonyi, 2011) (Waterbury, 2014) (Papp, 2017). Scholars point out that ethnic Hungarians see dual citizenship as an example of positive action and proof of responsibility of the kin-state towards the ethnic kin, as well as a sort of compensation for injustices from past and somewhat disadvantaged position that they enjoy in home states.

Egedy writes about the transnational nationalism, by giving the concrete examples, such as one about the major change that occurred when Fidesz started to dominate Hungarian political life in 2010. The new initiative in nation-building that was suggested introduced a practice in which the Hungarian state from then on represents the interest of not only the Hungarians living in Hungary but also the ones that live outside¹⁷ (Egedy, 2015). This means that official Budapest took the responsibility for the fate and well-being of all ethnic Hungarians, no matter where they live. Egedy also points out that the reformulating of the kin-state policy was needed since Orbán's government tried to move away from left-liberal and conservative approaches that were characteristic for Hungarian politics after the collapse of communism. The Fidesz government's idea of kin-state policy seeks to place the concept of the Hungarian nation in the focus, by using the national identity to mobilize ethnic kin abroad to promote national goals and interests. But, this was not as easy, since a big part of Hungarian society in the country does not have a set attitude about the ethnic kin and the Hungarian identity in general (Egedy, 2013).

Another interesting feature of Hungarians living in neighbouring countries, that is very important and that should be examined is related to the change in numbers of Hungarians

¹⁷ This initiative was also officially adopted and it is part of new Hungarian constitution - the Fundamental Law of 2011.

through the years. The Hungarian population is gradually decreasing since 1990 and the case of Vojvodina Hungarians is not an exception. Hungarian communities are somewhat disappointed over how little had been achieved regarding guaranteeing basic minority rights, so this research will try to look closer at the situation with Serbian Hungarians since little is known about their perspective. Ethnic Hungarians abroad today have their institutions that serve to represent their interest; they establish Hungarian political parties, media, church institutions, various cultural and civic organisations, etc. The situation with native language and education rights is better than it was until the 1990s and minorities take part in political life locally, regionally, and nationally in their home states. But, the level of protection and respect for minority rights differ from country to country. Many authors focus their works on Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania and less about Serbia and Ukraine (Veres, 2013) (Csergő & Goldgeier, 2013) (Iglesias, Sata, & Vass, 2016) (Skalnik Leff & Armeanu, 2017). Therefore, this research will try to get an overview of the situation in these Hungarian institutions abroad, regarding the respect of fundamental minority rights and general satisfaction with the status of Vojvodina Hungarians.

2.2.1 Hungarian kin-state support until 2010

The history of contemporary Hungarian kin-state support starts with changes that occurred in the region in the late 1980s-beginning of the 1990s. Hungarian political parties agreed on the need for kin-state to support the Hungarian institutions and unique culture abroad. The first task towards this was the establishment of an institution in Hungary that will deal with ethnic kin abroad - the Government Office for Hungarians Communities Abroad. This body was responsible for building a network of agencies, organisations and foundations that are important for preserving of Hungarian culture and language, improving education and economic levels and linking Hungarian minorities with Hungarian state (Csergő & Goldgeier, 2001). Besides that, the first post-communist government in Hungary also established a public foundation¹⁸, responsible for financing the national minorities abroad; as well as the TV channel

¹⁸ Illyés Alapítvány

‘Duna’¹⁹, which operates in neighbouring countries by delivering programmes in the Hungarian language. These projects represent the first elements offered to ethnic kin as part of modern Hungarian kin-state support.

In that period, the general opinion of the Hungarian elite was that the sort of autonomy for ethnic kin is necessary since it would ensure the sustainable, long-lasting survival of these communities in their historical lands. The aspirations of gaining autonomy might be supported by the kin-state, but most home states do not share the same opinion. Hungary started with the promotion of the rights of Hungarians across the border and developed strategies that supported their autonomy and collective language rights. However, the progress was not significant in the first period, so ethnic Hungarians abroad were unsatisfied and their number was declining (Wimmer, 2013). Already then, the political features of kin-state support started to emerge, since the redefinition of the nation was becoming one of the main principles that were used by elites to gain certain political points. Also, it served for the self-definition of political parties and the institutionalisation of the state on a national level (Bárdi, 2013).

One of the events that are considered to be the turning point in early Hungarian kin-state politics and that announced the direction of the new Hungarian government was the 1990 speech of former Hungarian Prime Minister, József Antall. Following his victory in the first democratic elections in Hungary, he said that he became the Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians²⁰, *“in spirit and sentiment”*. This loud was met by the support of Hungarian political parties from opposite sides of the political spectrum (Egedy, 2013, p. 69). The new Hungarian government started the democratic era with the decision to actively engage in kin-state politics, by working hard on developing the strategy on how to improve the position of their co-patriots across the border. The protection of Hungarian minority rights represented one of the fundamental principles of Hungarian foreign policy. However, this matter was not anything new in Hungarian affairs. The 1949 Hungarian Constitution emphasises that: *“The Republic of Hungary bears a sense of responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living outside its borders and*

¹⁹ Meaning: Danube

²⁰ In 1990, Hungary had a population of approximately 10 million people, so it was obvious who does this refer to.

shall promote and foster their relations with Hungary” (Act XX of 1949 The Constitution of the Republic of Hungary). Years under communism did not work in favour of this stance, but in the last 30 years, the idea to keep all Hungarians close developed and reached new peaks.

Those foundations of kin-state politics that were laid during the rule of Antall’s MDF also served to the Hungarian governments that came later. There were different approaches to kin-state politics, but the most proactive steps were taken under the rule of Fidesz (1998-2002; 2010-current). Orbán’s attitudes towards Hungarians abroad turned to be very similar to Antall’s, and he repeated his famous words, by saying that Hungary’s future lies not only in 10 million Hungarians from Hungary but in 15 million Hungarians no matter where they live. The politics towards the ethnic kin became a central feature of Orbán’s policy, so his government was actively working on strategies to improve the relations and offer wider support. According to Orbán, the Hungarians abroad did not represent a burden, but an important and politically very valuable matter (Bárdi, 2004).

During the first four years in power, Orbán’s government managed to realise two milestones of the Hungarian kin-state politics: the establishment of MÁÉRT²¹ - institutional forum of dialogue between the state of Hungary and Hungarians abroad; and the adoption of the Hungarian Status Law (Kovács E. , 2020).

The first step towards the institutionalisation of kin-state politics was the establishment of MÁÉRT - the Hungarian Standing Conference. The main role of this platform was to serve as the consultation forum between Hungarian state (Hungarian Parliamentarians and Ministers) and minority Hungarian representatives (organisations that have parliamentary or provincial representation in their home countries), respectively between Hungarian politicians from both sides of the border. Since 1999, MÁÉRT Conference was held once a year and the main issues of ethnic Hungarian communities were discussed (Kántor, 2014).

Besides establishing the Hungarian Standing Conference (MÁÉRT), another novelty of the Orbán’s government first term was the adoption of Hungarian Status Law. Act LXII of 2001

²¹ Magyar Állandó Értekezlet - the Hungarian Standing Conference.

on Hungarians Living in Neighbouring Countries or known in the literature as the Hungarian Status Law is not a unique practice that exists only in Hungary. The phenomenon of Status laws is very common in the CEE region²². It is called 'Status' law because it serves to manage and improve the status of ethnic kin abroad. Such laws are usually classified as patriot or benefit laws since they grant a wide range of benefits for co-patriots across the border. One of the most valuable benefits that were offered through Status Law was the Hungarian identity card - a certificate that served as a proof of the ethnic belonging (Küpper, 2006). This means that Hungarians from Romania, Yugoslavia²³, and Ukraine would be able to travel to Hungary without a visa. The purpose of this was the maintenance of cross-border ties of Hungary with Hungarians abroad also after the former joins the EU.

The Status Law's core benefit, the Hungarian identity card, provided Hungarians from neighbouring countries with a wide range of opportunities, such as education grants, work permits, access to health care and social security, etc. They could technically apply for the same state benefits as Hungarians from Hungary (Tóth, 2003). As part of Budapest's nation-building project, the ethnic Hungarians could also receive educational benefits if studying in their home state. According to Bárdi and Misovicz, the aim of this was to ensure that Hungarian ethnic communities are aware of their 'national' identity and that they will promote their native language and culture in their home states (Kántor, 2006).

The Hungarian Status Law represented another step towards the institutionalisation of the relations of Budapest and its ethnic kin. Also, it served as a tool to expand the Hungarian political community and strengthen the ties with the external voters. The occurrence of Hungarian Status Law in Hungarian foreign policy was specific because it evoked negative reactions of Hungarian neighbours, mostly Slovakia and Romania. One of the reasons for such reaction was the fact that this law was supposed to apply explicitly to Hungarians that live in neighbouring countries, and not the ethnic diaspora living in the West. Hungarian neighbours were concerned that such controversial law will worsen their bilateral relations and that such

²² Before Hungary, Slovakia and Romania adopted their own versions of Status laws in 1997 and 1998 respectively.

²³ Federal Republic of; the name Yugoslavia was kept until 2003, when it was renamed to Serbia and Montenegro.

politics could shake other state's sovereignty, so they called for the international reaction (Nagy, 2007). The same year, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe started investigating if this law is compatible with the international and most importantly European norms since Hungary was in the process of joining the EU. This was the first time that a European institution engaged in the investigation of already existing kin-state legislations at the European continent.

The Venice Commission's involvement resulted in the creation of general 'European norms' regarding the legitimacy and limitations of kin-state activism, which were presented in the form of a series of recommendations. They, inter alia, recommended following principles: *"...the possibility for States to adopt unilateral measures on the protection of their kin-minorities, irrespective of whether they live in neighbouring or in other countries, is conditional upon the respect of the following principles: a) the territorial sovereignty of States; b) pacta sunt servanda; c) friendly relations amongst States, and d) the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the prohibition of discrimination"* (The protection of national minorities by their kin-state, 2002).

The CoE Commission also investigated previous Hungarian kin-state practices. The Commission discouraged the creation and the appointment of institutions in other countries, which would act instead of kin-state. The decisions about it need to be made bilaterally (Weber, 2004). Taking into account the limitations received, the new Hungarian government developed the adjusted version of Status Law in 2003. However, this was just temporary and de jure, since it did not manage to decrease the support of kin-state activism that was present among the Hungarian elite. Orbán's Fidesz, that became the opposition party following the 2002 elections, was among the 'loudest' ones in the campaign for wider kin-state support, nonetheless (Udrea, 2014).

The Hungarian identity card that was introduced by Hungarian Status Law was a forerunner of Hungarian 'dual citizenship' law, which was suggested already in 1996 and became a political goal by 1998. The main setback for adopting this law earlier was the lack of

support within Fidesz's political opponents²⁴ and what was later proved also among the Hungarian public during the 2004 referendum on dual citizenship²⁵. One of the reasons for such poor support might lie in the fact that after many years under the communism²⁶, Hungarian public was lacking knowledge and interest about the ethnic kin and what would dual citizenship mean to them. Kovács suggests also other, even more important reasons, such as the fear that Hungarians coming from countries with the poorer economy will come and occupy their jobs or that the reform will cost Hungary a lot. Most of these arguments come from governing, socialist and liberal parties, who campaigned against the dual citizenship law (Kovács M., 2006).

One of the main arguments that socialist party used in their campaign was that Hungarians in Hungary should not allow ethnic Hungarians who do not work and live in Hungary, thus do not pay taxes to be able to have a say in Hungarian internal politics. By gaining citizenship, ethnic Hungarians would also be granted a right to vote in Hungarian parliamentary elections. This was a number one concern of then-governing political parties since they were aware of the fact that by gaining non-resident voting rights, ethnic Hungarians abroad would mostly vote for conservative parties²⁷ who proposed the dual citizenship in the first place. It is clear that the political stakes at that point were high and that political parties were aware of who would benefit the most from dual citizenship law (Waterbury, 2010).

The 2004 referendum showed that Hungarian political parties have different attitudes regarding the level of kin-state support that they are ready to offer to Hungarians abroad, so the certain polarisation of the approach towards the Hungarian kin-minority occurred. Due to the failure of Fidesz's proposal on dual citizenship, another legislation of Orbán's 1998-2002 government was revoked - the Hungarian Standing Conference. The MÁÉRT has not convened again because the relations between the then-current Hungarian government and Hungarians abroad got complicated. Until 2010, the Hungarian kin-state activism was very limited and in

²⁴ The two-third majority in the Parliament was needed for adopting a law on dual citizenship.

²⁵ Slightly more than a half (51.57%) of voters voted in favour of the dual citizenship law, but the turnout was very low (37.67%). Hence, the referendum was considered to be invalid (Kovács M., 2006).

²⁶ The period when Hungarians were not even aware of large number of their co-patriots living in neighbouring countries.

²⁷ Primarily Fidesz.

the background. The only co-operation that was still active was the economic one, within the EU cross-border regional fund framework.

2.2.2 Hungarian kin-state support after 2010

The year 2010 represents the beginning of a new era in Hungarian internal and external politics. The conservative party Fidesz secured a landslide victory in 2010 parliamentary elections and after 8 years again became a governing party. Fidesz is seen as a centre-right fraction, so it is not a surprise that nationalism in 2010 onwards is the prime principle of Hungarian geopolitics and economic development framework. This political change gave new life to the Hungarian kin-state politics and Fidesz continued where it was stopped two political circles ago. Although the referendum on dual citizenship failed, Orbán's government knew how important it is for its political stability to commit to introducing non-resident citizenship promptly.

Three months after the elections, the first legislative act of the new government was passed. The amendment suggested was related to the Hungarian Law on Citizenship, so the Hungarian kin-state politics were back into the centre of Hungarian external politics. Starting January 2011, non-resident Hungarians abroad were able to request the Hungarian citizenship, without having the permanent residence in Hungary. The new amendments make the whole process simpler and it minimised the requirements. To become a Hungarian citizen, a person needs to meet two major criteria: a) prove the Hungarian ancestry and; b) have a basic command of the Hungarian language. Due to the simplicity of requirements, the whole process is very open to abuse.

Firstly, to prove the Hungarian ancestry, an applicant must provide the evidence of being related to the ancestor who was Hungarian or lived on the territory of former Hungary²⁸; and can prove it by death or birth certificates. Since former Hungary used to cover a significant

²⁸ Which include also Kingdom of Hungary and Austro-Hungarian Empire.

territory and was very multiethnic, the geography and ethnicity of possible applicants got wider. Secondly, the language requirement is very vague, since it states that one needs to 'know the language'. Also, there is no exam or the list of questions that the applicant needs to prepare. The level of applicant's language knowledge is assessed by usually very busy clerks during a brief meeting²⁹ (Pogonyi, 2013).

For the applicants from non-EU countries as Ukraine and Serbia, having Hungarian citizenship can be life-changing. Being a Hungarian citizen means having EU citizenship, thanks to which one would be able to work, move freely, and enjoy all other opportunities within the EU. Also, many Serbians for instance, who do not necessarily have anything in common with Hungarian ethnos, but can easily 'find' an ancestor who lived in Austro-Hungary, realised that this citizenship law can be abused and saw it as an opportunity to gain the EU citizenship. This increased demand for Hungarian lessons in Serbia since 2011. In the last couple of years, the Hungarian government identified this abuse, so it raised the level of language requirement and now a solid Hungarian is required (*'Sve teže do mađarskog državljanstva'*, 2016).

The amendment of dual citizenship was followed by the amendment of the electoral law shortly. So, another benefit of kin-state support was introduced, which is voting rights to non-resident citizens. Fidesz's government certainly had a great interest in introducing these amendments and there was not almost any public debate or the involvement of the opposition (Bozoki, 2013). Besides gaining the potential voters among 'new' Hungarian citizens, it also helped in creating the general national image of this political party and it attracted new domestic voters, who sympathise with ethnic Hungarian communities abroad (Waterbury, 2017). The new Hungarian external policy, by December 2017, led to already one million ethnic Hungarians, who exercised their right and gained dual citizenship (*'Hungary grants its millionth Hungarian citizenship'*, 2017). Judging by the latest elections in which Fidesz participated, i. e. the elections for European Parliament in 2019, it is obvious that Orbán's government chose the right path. An absolute majority, or 96% of non-EU Hungarian non-resident citizens who had voted, cast their votes in favour of Fidesz (*'Hungarians outside EU cast votes for Fidesz'*, 2019).

²⁹ The situation changed a bit in last couple of years, so now a solid knowledge of Hungarian is required.

The reaction on such wide Hungarian kin-state politics is nevertheless missing from the EU. Batory noticed that the EU and CoE reacted in 2001 when the Status Law introduced the extraterritorial benefits to Hungarian ethnic kin, but they did not do the same in 2010 when the idea of dual citizenship re-emerged (Batory, 2010). The reason for the missing reaction can be found in Pogonyi's argument that dual citizenship already became the norm in many European countries by that time, since they needed migrants to meet labour market shortages, especially the ones who can be well integrated into European societies (Pogonyi, 2017).

Along with the amendments mentioned above, Orbán's government introduced also other measures that are part of the kin-state support. The Hungarian kin-state politics got their governmental institution, within the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice. The State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad was constituted and its main function is to be in charge of kin-state policy. In 2010 the MÁÉRT Conference was reactivated and already next year it adopted the Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad. This framework became the first comprehensive document of Hungarian kin-state policy. Clear definitions of the Hungarian government strategy regarding the Hungarian communities abroad can be found in this document (Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad, 2011).

Concerning the financial part of kin-state support, the Bethlen Gábor Fund was established and it replaced all previous foundations that existed. Today, this organisation represents the major public body that deals with funds for Hungarian ethnic kin's organisations, institutions, and individuals. The fund for financing the projects of Hungarians abroad is constantly increasing since 2010 (Kovács E., 2020). In 2015, the Hungarian government came up with the '50 billion HUF Plan'³⁰. This 5-year-plan fund is intended for the economic development of Vojvodina, support of farm export, and granting money (*'Hungary to launch HUF 50 bln program in Serbia'*, 2015).

The kin-state activism is a very complex phenomenon since there are many types of support and there are various interests behind it. The example of Hungary shows how far this

³⁰ Approximately 143.6 million EUR.

support can go that sometimes it directly or indirectly intervenes in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries. Kin-state wants the best for its ethnic minorities abroad, so this sometimes also includes advocating for autonomy, establishing different institutions, and financing kin-minority's activities. In return, the Hungarian government can expect the political support of ethnic kin through votes. Hungary invested a lot of effort and resources in its kin-state politics, so it is clear why it is considered to be probably the most proactive kin-state in the CEE region.

2.3 Political aspects of Hungarian kin-state activism

The complexity of kin-state activism in Hungary also lies in the fact that its purpose is very multidimensional. Besides the generally accepted opinion that the main reason for active kin-state support is the moral sense of ethnic affiliation and restoration of national identity; the probably main intention of kin-state's political elite is primarily oriented around political and to a certain extent, economical interests. Nevertheless, the common ethnic belonging and national feeling still represent an inseparable and crucial element of kin-state politics foundation and serve as a foreground behind which other interests can be realised.

Myra A. Waterbury argues that the political and strategic purpose of kin-state politics is the reason why kin-states are so engaged in keeping their ethnic kin as close as possible. She suggests that political elites of kin-state are driven by three sets of resources that ethnic kin can bring: a) 'material' for economic interests; b) 'culturo-linguistic' for nation-building interests and; c) 'political' which bring power to kin-state elites (Waterbury, 2010). All three, more or less, can be applied to Hungarian kin-state politics, but the latter two are more dominant than the former one.

The material resources are more typical for kin-states whose diaspora work in economically more developed countries and their economy benefits a lot from investments and remittances that they send back to their family back home. Also, it is common for diaspora

communities to offer an external market for kin-state's export. As mentioned before, Hungary does not get any direct economic return from minority communities (Pogonyi, 2017). However, the Hungarian case is interesting, since the justification for kin-state activities also includes the promises of economic gains from ethnic kin communities in the future, e.g. as a pool of labour (Melegh, 2003).

Regarding the culturo-linguistic set of resources, the main interest is the strategic one. The ethnic kin communities preserve the language, culture, and national identity on the territories that used to be controlled by the kin-state. Therefore, they play an important role in the nation-building process. Hungarian state generously financially supports the projects that promote the Hungarian language and culture. The possible threats to these communities, such as assimilation or emigration, are seen very negatively from the kin-state's perspective since they jeopardise the ethnic kin survival on historical lands. Another feature of this type of correlation is that ethnic kin can be used as a proof of national myths, which further can justify the nationalism, as part of the state policy (Barkey, 2000). This is common for Fidesz, which is seen from its voters as a saviour of the nation who grants non-resident citizenship, preserves the language and culture, and calls for autonomy as part of its kin-state politics. In this way, Fidesz somehow corrects the historical injustices in the eyes of its voters and kin abroad.

Finally, the most controversial resource that a kin-state can gain from its ethnic kin is the political one. In the Hungarian case, already in the late 1970s, the right-wing fractions started the promotion of more active kin-state involvement, as part of political strategy. After the regime change, in the late 1980s, when the Alliance of Young Democrats³¹ (Fidesz) was established, the engagement with ethnic kin across the border was set as an essential political course of the party (Waterbury, 2006). Until the middle of the 1990s, Fidesz could be rather defined as a liberal party, opposing the right-wing government. This early start later provided Fidesz with an important advantage in political competition, when the support from Hungarians abroad started to rise. This is especially the case after the country joined the EU and by default, the value of Hungarian citizenship got sufficiently higher.

³¹ Changed in 1995 to Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Party, and then in 2003 to Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Alliance.

To reach the point when ethnic kin abroad starts to bring the political benefit, right-wing parties had to focus first on the promotion of culturo-linguistic aspects. From the beginning, the ties with ethnic kin were built on loyalty. Parties that had strong nationalist rhetoric were promising to protect the rights of ethnic kin abroad and tried to present themselves as the main protectors of the Hungarian nation. This can be said especially for the period after the middle of the 1990s, when the socialist-liberal government signed basic treaties with Slovakia and Romania, which was criticized by Fidesz, being on its shift from liberal to right-wing positions (Lanczi, 2005). Fidesz managed to preserve the ethnic kin's loyalty, so this opened the door for the development of kin-state activism to such a level, when it was possible to advocate and later adopt the non-resident voting rights.

Keeping the ethnic kin connected to the kin-state requires a lot of effort and continuity. It is very important for the kin-state to constantly remind the kin-minority that they matter, by introducing new privileges and benefits. Fidesz did exactly that during its first and the latest two terms, and it still engages actively by constantly raising the funds for support and advocating for the autonomy of Hungarians in neighbouring countries. Thinking long term, the successful kin-state politics depend on the capability of kin-state to balance between its interest and desire to be in control of kin-state - kin-minority relations and consideration of the needs of the ethnic kin communities (Waterbury, 2020). This research's task is exactly that - analysing different aspects of Hungarian kin-state politics, with all its features above and under the surface; and comparing it with Vojvodina Hungarians' expectations, needs, and issues. Only after considering both sides of kin-state-support-medal, the conclusions on actual reality will be possible.

2.4 Hungarian kin-minorities

Approximately 2.1 million³² ethnic Hungarians enjoy the status of a kin-minority. Hungarians mostly live in Romania (1.2 million), Slovakia (450.000), Serbia (250.000), and Ukraine (150.000) and represent the main subject of Hungarian kin-state politics. Two main

³² According to 2011 population censuses held in Romania, Slovakia and Serbia; and 2001 census in Ukraine.

features of ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring countries are: a) they have a strong feeling of Hungarian national identity and; b) their number and percentage is significantly decreasing. These features are mostly shaped by the activities related to Hungarian kin-state support and some other general trends in the region.

The authors as Nándor Bárdi prefer to use the term 'Hungarian minority communities' when speaking of ethnic Hungarians abroad, due to their strong Hungarian affiliation. Despite the common language, ethnicity, and culture, these Hungarian communities also took part in the Hungarian nation-building process before the collapse of Austro-Hungary (Bárdi, 2013). Another reason, for such a strong feeling of Hungarian national identity that is linked to the previous one, can be found in Schöpflin's works. He argues that these communities stick to their primary cultural and political aspiration to remain Hungarian, thanks to a very close relationship with their kin-state. Additionally, the fact that ethnic Hungarian communities took part in Hungarian nation-building and not one of their home states makes their Hungarian national affiliation inseparable part of their national identity (Schöpflin, 2006). Pogonyi, suggests that most ethnic Hungarians consider that their Hungarian national identity is somewhat stronger than the one from Hungarians in Hungary. The argument is that ethnic Hungarians are confronted with their nationality daily, e. g. when using their mother tongue in communities where another, the majority language is more dominated (Pogonyi, 2017).

Geopolitical changes caused by the outcomes of World War I made ethnic Hungarians a national minority in their current home states. This has put them in an inferior position compared to the majority population, so the fight for wider rights is constantly on their political agenda. Taking into account their kin-states' nationalist affinities, it is not a surprise that kin-minorities are striving for the institutionalisation of their status in the form of self-government or autonomy within the home state. It is obvious, that the higher is level of autonomy, the higher is the level of their social and political organisation. Hungarian neighbours have different approaches and opinions on the level of the autonomy that should be allowed to their Hungarian minorities. None of the countries is willing to provide national, territorial autonomies, but offer some other forms of protection instead. Hungary as a kin-state is a

significant player in these debates and it is clear that without its participation, Hungarian minorities would not be able to maintain already existing systems of minority institutions, primarily financially (Bárdi, 2004).

In 2011, the Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad labelled the survival of ethnic Hungarian communities as one of the main principles of kin-state politics. An explanation of the Hungarian government's position regarding the relation between Hungarian minority and their home state was given and it praised the current situation in Serbia: *"Similarly to the titular nations, national minorities strive to preserve their identities and ensure the prosperity of their communities. No national minority – including Hungarians – assimilates voluntarily. Hungarians living in neighbouring countries experience various (explicit or implicit) disadvantages compared to majority communities. The state shall not differentiate between citizens based on their national belongings. Citizens' equal rights are not fully guaranteed if equality is not ensured at the level of minority nationalities. After the breakdown of the communist system, Hungarian minorities established interest representation organisations and political parties, which formulated demands regarding minority rights, autonomy, and unhindered relations with Hungary. Progress has been achieved in comparison to the pre-1989 situation, but institutions essential for the growth and reproduction of Hungarian communities have not been established. The main political objectives of national communities are on the one hand territorial autonomy and the creation of smaller, self-governing units within the state, and on the other hand the foundation of independent institutions. In this area, progress has only been made in Vojvodina (Serbia), where in 2010 the Hungarian National Council - the political body of Hungarian cultural autonomy – was established through direct and democratic elections"* (Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad, 2011). This position makes sense, bearing in mind the Fidesz's political stances. The case of Vojvodina shows that some of the Hungarian neighbours are ready to discuss these issues and take concrete actions regarding the improvement of Hungarian minority status.

Another important matter that follows the Hungarian kin-minority is the outlook of their future/their survival within the home state. The data shows that the number of Hungarians in

neighbouring countries is constantly dropping and the reasons for it are specific for every country. Besides some of the general trends as that the population is generally getting older, other common trends are the assimilation, when offspring from mixed marriages usually adopt the identity of a 'majority' parent; or due to the war, especially common in the Balkans (Bárdi, 2013). However, the economic migration to Hungary and further 'West' represents the major reason (Gödri, 2015). Hungary is economically significantly more developed than many neighbours and it is also an EU country, so wide Hungarian kin-state support has a major influence on the drop in the number of minority Hungarians. Hungarians do emigrate from their historical lands and the dual citizenship law opened the doors for that. After adding their home state's passivity to engage more proactively in the autonomy projects³³, it is more than obvious that the decision to migrate is not as difficult to be taken.

To stop the emigration of ethnic Hungarians, Budapest came with different strategic plans, regarding the improvement of the economic status of its ethnic kin, since the economic migration is the main reason for the emigration. The goal of these plans is to create more job opportunities and improve the standards of living, by for instance investing in tourism of the areas where kin-minority lives (*'Vlada Mađarske brine o sunarodnicima u Srbiji: Vojvođanskim Mađarima za razvoj turizama 20 miliona evra'*, 2019) or supporting Hungarian small and medium-sized enterprises (*'Mađarska pomaže vojvođanske Mađare'*, 2016). Also, they focus on institutional development through various educational and business programmes. Since these funds are allocated either by Budapest or by certain minority actors, parties, party-related agencies, etc., they also serve as some kind of an electoral mobilization.

2.4.1 Hungarians in Vojvodina

Hungarians in Serbia represent the country's biggest and most compact minority group (excluding Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija, who boycotted the census), with a population

³³ These projects (dual citizenship and struggle for autonomy) hardly coincide, especially when it comes to non-EU neighbours (Serbia, Ukraine). They provide different incentives, so they may have different outcomes (stay or leave).

of 253,899 people or 3.5% of the country, according to the 2011 Census. The vast majority of ethnic Hungarians (251,136 people) live in the Serbian Autonomous Province of Vojvodina where they represent 13% of the total province's population (Bárdi, 2013). Hungarians form an absolute/relative majority in eight out of 45 Vojvodina municipalities. The multicultural city of Subotica in the very north of the country is considered to be the main cultural and political centre of Serbian Hungarians.

Since late 2000, when democrats came to power in Serbia, the country is on its way towards becoming an EU member; and achieving the general state of democracy. To become a modern, European state, Serbia must prove its willingness to deal with human rights issues. Being particularly ethnically and culturally diverse, with 23 officially registered minority groups³⁴; one of the essential efforts that the Serbian government is required to take is related to actively encouraging the political participation of these minority communities and the general preservation of their culture and language. This aspect of minority politics is key for cultural reproduction and the survival of the community in general (Kapitány, 2015). The Hungarian language is one the official languages of Vojvodina province³⁵, therefore, the Hungarians have a right to be taught in their mother tongue³⁶, use it in public, administration, education, etc.

As mentioned in the Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad, Serbia is the only Hungarian neighbour³⁷ which grants its Hungarian minority with cultural non-territorial autonomy and group rights. In 2002, Yugoslav³⁸ Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities introduced the National Minority Council, an institution through which every registered national minority can exercise its cultural autonomy (Korhecz, 2014). The funding for the National Minority Council activities is provided from the national, regional, and local budgets of the Republic of Serbia. Also, the activities can be financed by donations and other income, which technically can (and does) include funds from a kin-state.

³⁴ Most of the minority groups live in Vojvodina.

³⁵ In 31 out of 45 Vojvodina municipalities.

³⁶ Primary, Secondary and Tertiary education.

³⁷ Along with Croatia and Slovenia, who have significantly less Hungarians.

³⁸ Until 2003 the country was called FRY - Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and (today's Serbia and Montenegro).

Article 1a of Serbian Law on National Councils of National Minorities from 2009 describes National Minority Council as *“an organisation legally entrusted certain public competences to participate in decision making or to independently make decision about certain issues in the area of culture, education, information, and official use of languages and scripts in order to achieve the collective right of a national minority to self-government in those areas”* (The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2009). Every four years, the members of National Minority Councils are elected, through direct elections. For Hungarian National Council, a total of 35 members are elected, suggested by Hungarian political parties' lists. The general practice is that party lists, besides politicians, also include non-political individuals - usually prominent members of civil organisations, church, or intelligentsia.

Hungarians in Serbia actively participate in political life locally, regionally, and nationally. So, one of the characteristics of HNC is that it serves as a platform for different political interests and influences as well. The main Hungarian minority parties in Serbia are VMSZ (Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians), VMDK (Democratic Community of Vojvodina Hungarians), and VMDP (Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians) (Hagan Darin, 2009). The convincingly most dominant party out of three is VMSZ (Herner-Kovács, Illyés, & Rákóczi, 2015). The party enjoys big support from the ruling Serbian majority party - SNS. Because of that, it is usually accused by its opponents of having a special, privileged status. Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians is also the only party that regularly participates in general Serbian state elections and every year records better and better results. In the last couple of convocation of the Serbian assembly, Hungarians normally occupied four to six out of 250 seats, as part of a special minority quota. While at the latest elections, held in June 2020, the VMSZ managed to get 'historical' nine seats (Ivković, 2020). Just for comparison, the third most popular Serbian national party at the moment, the Serbian Patriotic Alliance, won 11 seats, so Hungarians are technically the fourth-strongest party on a national level in the Serbian Parliament. The reason for this can be found in their voiced support of the SNS and Fidesz politics. Almost certainly, VMSZ will be part of the new Serbian government as well and can expect to be highly placed, due to, among other things, their loyalty to SNS. The VMSZ serves as a sort of a link between

Hungarian and Serbian leading political parties. Fidesz and SNS and their leaders Orbán and Vučić have a very good political and economic co-operation in the last couple of years. Therefore, those Hungarian voters who support SNS and VMSZ in Serbia also support Fidesz, which was seen in the 2018 parliamentary elections (Trivić, 2018) as well as the 2019 EP elections (Cseresnyés, 2019).

As in other countries in a Hungarian neighbourhood, the Hungarian minority in Serbia is in decline. In the last 50 years, every census there were around 40-50,000 Hungarians less (Stjepanović, 2018). Since the last census was held in 2011, the same year when the Hungarian dual citizenship law was introduced, the expected numbers of Hungarians in next year's census are discouraging (Keller-Alánt, 2020). According to VMSZ leader, István Pásztor, today, almost every Hungarian in Serbia already obtained a Hungarian passport (*'Pastor: Gotovo svi Mađari u Vojvodini imaju dva državljanstva'*, 2020). This passport does not have a symbolic purpose only, but also, more importantly, takes Serbian Hungarians to the EU, gives them access to the labour market, and free movement within. Thus, the benefits of Hungarian kin-state support in Serbia are obvious. And, more importantly for Hungarian Fidesz, their kin-state support brings the desired results and political benefits in return.

In the chapter that follows, all of the specifics of kin-state support in Serbia, as well as the minority rights that the Hungarian kin-minority enjoys will be tested.

Chapter 3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1 Findings

The interviews with the representatives of Vojvodina Hungarian minority were essential for creating an image of the actual state of affairs and issues that this community faces. The Hungarians in Vojvodina are a very compact and well-organised community and they manage to keep good ties with both the Serbian and the Hungarian state. Having a status of minority puts them in a position where they can benefit from both sides. These benefits are followed by different interests that can cause problems for the community in general. The analysis of primary data allowed the identification and clustering of Vojvodina Hungarians' issues. The main themes of Hungarian minority issues could be grouped as follows:

A) The issues of Hungarian autonomy. Serbian state provided Hungarians with the cultural autonomy and institutionalised it by creating the Hungarian National Council. Nevertheless, some of the issues remain and they are usually connected with the passivity or hidden interests of the Serbian side, which is exposed through law changes.

B) Political interests. The Hungarian political life in Vojvodina has a rich history however the political parties are more and more polarised. One of them has been more dominant than the others and it is supported by leading Hungarian and Serbian national parties, Fidesz and SNS. The support is not only political, but it is also financial and it leaves people from the other side of the political spectrum very unsatisfied.

C) General problems. Being a member of a minority group, one needs to face certain problems that the majority does not even think about, such as problems of use of language. Having a unique mother tongue and not knowing/not being able to learn the majority language well, creates the issues in minority education and later the employability in the home country.

D) Emigration. Various causes lead to increasing minority emigration. The most evident ones are the poorer economy of the home state, the power of benefits offered by the kin-state, and others related to the lack of respect for minority rights.

3.1.1 Hungarian autonomy

Hungary as a kin-state promotes the idea that neighbouring countries with a significant Hungarian population should provide them with the wider autonomy and praises the case of Vojvodina. SERB-1.1.1 confirms that the Vojvodina case is successful: *“Out of all the Hungarian communities in the Carpathian Basin (out with Hungary), the Vojvodina Hungarians were the first ones who defined the concept of autonomy, which contributed a lot to Serbia’s unique success in the realization of personal and cultural autonomy”*³⁹.

Although the general public in Serbia, due to the negative experience with Kosovo Albanians, is afraid that Hungarians could more actively fight for the territorial autonomy of Vojvodina Province, it seems that Vojvodina Hungarians do not think the same way and that is too late for that: *“Well, we don’t think it would be realistic as the number of the Vojvodina Hungarians has decreased dramatically that we could not make it work today”*⁴⁰. So, the establishment of HNC was welcomed by everyone and it represents the main institution of Hungarian autonomy in Serbia. Many interviewees are aware of its significance: *“We also think, that the HNC is not a goal but a device of the Hungarians to have a say in political matters (with the help of the representatives) on state-wide, provincial and regional levels. The Hungarian National Council aims for the conservation and the improvement of Hungarian identity and culture”*⁴¹. Nevertheless, the HNC also has flaws and Vojvodina Hungarian representatives mentioned them. One of the representatives of the HNC, who insists on calling Vojvodina *“The Southern Land”*, considers that the law on national councils is not good enough and that the Serbian side is responsible: *“The law itself is bleeding from many wounds. I believe that Serbia is a ‘shop window country’ which has always managed to show to the world how well they treat the minorities. Which is obviously not true at all”*⁴².

Many of the complaints about the HNC are related to its Act and certain modifications that occurred in 2014 and diminished some of the previous rights: *“Our main issue related to*

³⁹ SERB-1.1.1, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁴⁰ SERB-1.3.1, Interview with political party representative, Temerin, 18 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁴¹ SERB-1.1.1, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁴² SERB-2.1.4, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, 16 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

*the legal rights of the national council is that the HNC only has opinionizing rights; they can only practice the right for veto in certain cases; furthermore, they don't or hard[l]y have any decision making rights"*⁴³. Also: *"We think that one of our main task (and the common point we all share) is to modify the law on the national councils. The Serbian Constitutional Court has overruled certain regulations, also re-established others; while the law on the national councils isn't in harmony with other laws. These matters need to be settled"*⁴⁴. Or as the Vojvodina provincial official describes it: *"I think the constitutional court was very wrong. If the state says you can establish minority councils, then let them have some decision making rights...We have a beautiful council system but we cannot do anything with it"*⁴⁵.

Another issue that Hungarians face is related to Serbia's legal approach to dealing with one's ethnicity as part of the national minority definition. Vojvodina Hungarians do not know how many of them are there since the declaration of one's ethnicity is voluntary: *"As a start, the law on national councils should be rewritten now. It must be decided who can be called Hungarian. We proposed to take the electoral registry as a fundamental document which helps to estimate the real number of Hungarians living here"*⁴⁶. But, the reason for missing such registry was also explained: *"According to the modern principles of the human rights, no one has the right to know someone else's ethnicity, mainly not the state. This is the adequate format to follow; this is the definition for minority identity in Western Europe, in the western societies. The voluntary admission works in Serbia, only the personal manifestation can determinate who has what ethnicity"*⁴⁷.

According to some, the ideal law on national minorities, that could contribute to the general satisfaction of the minority communities and therefore keep them in Serbia, would regulate the question of proportional employment. However, the reason why this cannot be practised more actively is again due to the lack of an ethnicity registry: *"An ideal law would work for the Hungarian minority. I think most importantly it would include the proportional*

⁴³ SERB-1.3.1, Interview with political party representative, Temerin, 18 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁴⁴ SERB-1.2.1, Interview with political party representative, Ada, 18 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁴⁵ SERB-3.1.2, Interview with Vojvodina provincial official, Novi Sad, 13 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁴⁶ SERB-2.1.4, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, 16 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁴⁷ SERB-2.1.3, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

employment. The proportional employment is a very big issue concerning the modern views. One's ethnicity cannot be directly questioned - this is one of the problems - and the other one is that the ethnicity is a state of mind"⁴⁸. The Vojvodina provincial official SERB-3.1.2 explains it: "Because here, no one recognises anyone, everyone has a right to declare themselves whatever they want to be... You can belong to any ethnic group, and it can be changed regularly... and of course it has advantages. But what are the disadvantages? Well, in such a frame, the affirmative actions cannot be practiced... It is impossible to check, and it would be a violation of human rights to judge someone due to the colour of their skin or the surnames of the parents"⁴⁹.

While the complaints mostly come from people outside of the HNC, the representatives of this body see other problems, such as the funding: "Concerning the HNC and the national councils in general, I think that this is a very good system; however, in Serbia, the unity within the national councils seems to be very important alongside with the help of the mother country. The sum that is spent on the national councils are very small compare to what they need. If Hungary didn't support Vojvodina's programs and the execution of our goals, then it would be very difficult to succeed. Based on the jurisdiction, the national councils should only be receiving basic support from Serbia, just enough to cover the operational costs. I do not believe it is good. Without a doubt, the success depends on the strength of the national councils. And this is the reason why we have been successful"⁵⁰.

The direct financial support from the kin-state is common practice and it seems that the Serbian state does not have anything against it since it benefits from it: "...if we counted only the tax (so 20%) of the support we receive from Hungary, it would not even be as much as what the Serbian state provides us. So, obviously the support we receive from Hungary is spent here, in Serbia... On almost everything, the VAT is 20%... All the money we spend here in Serbia, its VAT obviously goes to the Serbian state budget. So, I am saying that the support we receive from the Serbian state is actually less than the 20% of what we spend. This is a very interesting

⁴⁸ SERB-2.3.1, Interview with HNC representative, Bečej, May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁴⁹ SERB-3.1.2, Interview with Vojvodina provincial official, Novi Sad, 13 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁵⁰ SERB-2.3.1, Interview with HNC representative, Bečej, May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

*fact; the Serbian government ends up having more money because of the support the HNC receives from the Hungarian state*⁵¹.

Taking into account everything that has been said previously, the general position of Hungarians in Serbia, no matter if they are Hungarian citizenship holders or not, can be described as: *“It is difficult to say whether any Hungarians, who are also Serbia citizens, wake up with the thought of ‘how good it is to be here and to have the National Council’. However, if we forget about this demagogue aspect, the National Council has proved that people are benefiting from its actions... Now, it can be said being Hungarian in Serbia is an advantage (unlike in the last 90 or over 90 years)”*⁵².

3.1.2 Political issues

As discussed earlier, the Hungarian kin-state politics consist of multiple political interests. One of the ways to maintain the ties with the ethnic kin is by supporting the Hungarian minority parties in neighbouring states, and that is exactly what Fidesz does in Serbia as well. Among the interviewees, members of different political parties can be found, and depending on their views towards Fidesz and Serbian SNS, the issues differ. The representative of VMSZ justifies the collaboration with Fidesz: *“Meanwhile, it is also essential for the VMSZ to have a good collaboration with the Hungarian government in power, to make sure that our ideas receive support from them too. (Obviously, I can only talk in the name of VMSZ) we have a strategical collaboration with the current government, the FIDESZ (Hungarian Civic Alliance). There are many benefits of this collaboration... Certainly, the Hungarian National Council also benefits from this collaboration”*⁵³. Besides that, a strong relationship with Vučić's SNS is also very beneficial for the Hungarian community in general: *“Also, Vojvodina Hungarians’ persistent political interest enabled the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) consistent parliamentary representation, partial governing – due to obtained mandates -, the invention of the National*

⁵¹ SERB-2.3.1, Interview with HNC representative, Bečej, May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁵² SERB-1.1.1, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁵³ SERB-1.1.1, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

*Councils, the Minority Framework Law, as well as the National Council Act. To achieve the above, the specimen of VMSZ successfully sought partners in the form of the Serbian political parties*⁵⁴. This was indeed proved during the latest parliamentary elections in Serbia.

However, the political opponents of VMSZ have some other concerns: *“...the VMSZ has a very remarkable structure and is a well-supported organisation. As we have noticed, the definition of the public interests has become unifacial, so István Pásztor’s opinion is identified as the interests of Vojvodina Hungarians. What the VMSZ (István Pásztor) decides, that will be executed no matter what*⁵⁵. Also, they are aware that the more divided they get, the closer will VMSZ get to SNS: *“To be honest with you the more we disagreed with them the closer they got to the Serbian Progressive Party... Now, one of the border lines between the politics of the Serbian Progressive Party and the VMSZ is that the VMSZ is saying that without any doubt and without any requirements, only the Serbian Progressive Party can be the partner of the Hungarian community, and the only way is that if they take on governing role with the VMSZ*⁵⁶. According to this, if a group of Hungarians who do not support the majority party SNS, wants to achieve something, they run into a problem.

The political dominance and wide state support that VMSZ gets, leads to a polarisation of Vojvodina Hungarian political life also inside the HNC and puts the opposition in a very unfavourable position. The opposition parties’ representatives said that they do not receive any help from the Hungarian side: *“...we never managed to receive[~~d~~] enough support, not from Budapest, nor from this country*⁵⁷. While for the VMSZ and Fidesz, the opposition says: *“Now, it is crystal clear, the VMSZ is the only partner of the Hungarian government. They don’t even want to acknowledge the other organisations*⁵⁸ and *“Well, when I said the Hungarian government supports parties, I did not mean that they are putting money into their pockets but...I don’t actually know how this support works. When we talk about support, I meant institutional, and political support. And for that institutional system that the Hungarians have in*

⁵⁴ SERB-1.1.1, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁵⁵ SERB-2.1.3, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁵⁶ SERB-1.1.2, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 17 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁵⁷ SERB-1.2.1, Interview with political party representative, Ada, 18 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁵⁸ SERB-1.1.2, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 17 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

Vojvodina, for example the financial support system that has just been launched...this practically was trusted with the VMSZ. This is how I mean the support of the Hungarian government”⁵⁹.

The fact is that the VMSZ enjoys the biggest support among Serbian Hungarians and represents the majority in HNC, after the 2018 elections⁶⁰; so it is not a surprise that the kin-state sees VMSZ as its closest ally and trustee. The financial resources are addressed towards the HNC, and the VMSZ takes responsibility for its distribution. Besides a lot of power that VMSZ got with this funding, everyone agrees that this is beneficial to the whole Hungarian community in Serbia, taking into account that the Serbian side covers only the HNC operational expenses: *“If we didn’t receive any background support from Hungary, the HNC would not work effectively; it would probably be without any resources”⁶¹ and “However, if the Hungarian state wasn’t supporting us, we could not do anything... that would be a totally futile”⁶².*

Nevertheless, the opposition still criticises the VMSZ’s role in HNC comparing it with: *“The VMSZ is treating the HNC as if it was a Hungarian puli dog”⁶³ and accusing it of using kin-state funding for its interests: “I don’t think the Hungarian state’s duty would be to sustain the HNC. The majority of the money goes to the VMSZ to achieve their own goals. The culture events the VMSZ organises are actually party events. The money put aside for the culture and education are invested in their own party, for party promotion... Because the parties according to the Serbian law cannot be financed abroad. If a party is caught on it can be banned from politics. The HNC is a non-governmental organisation with special authorisation, that’s why they can receive support from the Hungarian state”⁶⁴.*

The further accusations are related to the (in) dependency of media. The opposition representatives are displeased with the whole situation: *“The bad news is that, the VMSZ manages to control all the Vojvodina Hungarian media (through the national council[s]). There is live broadcasting from the HNC sessions and luckily, this is how we can get the important*

⁵⁹ SERB-1.3.1, Interview with political party representative, Temerin, 18 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁶⁰ Although, the smaller parties boycotted the elections, complaining that VMSZ has privileged status.

⁶¹ SERB-1.2.1, Interview with political party representative, Ada, 18 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁶² SERB-2.1.1, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁶³ SERB-2.1.3, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁶⁴ SERB-2.1.4, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, 16 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

thoughts to the citizens.”⁶⁵ and they give the following examples: *“I suggest you to look up the Magyar Szó, so the only Hungarian daily paper’s web page... The paper has been set to serve one political organisation... the VMSZ was presented in the media in 95% (due to the terms of reference of the national councils), while the others were only in 5%.”*⁶⁶.

One of the HNC representatives suggests that *“it would be better if none of the parties influenced the national council”*⁶⁷. The same idea comes from Vojvodina provincial official: *“Sadly, politics has had very bad effects already... You know, those media which aren’t close to the power, hardly get any funding... now it is more about what party it supports. All the minorities work this way, not just the Hungarians... there are lots of problems with the distribution of the funding, not only in the HNC but in the other minority councils as well; the focus is consistently on who supports what party when distributing funding. However, it should have nothing to do with it. I also would like the national councils to understand that a transparent well established system is required. This is the problem that the negative sides of politics have affected the national councils”*⁶⁸. So, even neutral non-political side notices how bad is for the minority community to have political interests in the centre of their activities.

3.1.3 General minority issues

Despite being a minority, Hungarians in Serbia do not seem to be highly discriminated against in general, but some of the actions to improve their lives should still be taken. The basic issues of Hungarians in Serbia can be classified into three groups: language use, education, and unemployment. All of them are connected and can lead to greater dissatisfaction, which further usually results in emigration. Starting from the language, Hungarian is an official language in the province of Vojvodina and Hungarians have a right to be supported in using their mother tongue. One of the HNC members said: *“I have never been discriminated or suffered by any*

⁶⁵ SERB-1.2.1, Interview with political party representative, Ada, 18 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁶⁶ SERB-1.1.2, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 17 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁶⁷ SERB-2.2.1, Interview with HNC representative, Bačka Topola, 17 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁶⁸ SERB-3.1.2, Interview with Vojvodina provincial official, Novi Sad, 13 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

*harm just because I am Hungarian or because I belong to a minority. And as far as I know, none of my friends or family experienced anything like this. Talking about our language rights, how we can use it or how we can't...we could debate this for a long time. In many cases, Hungarians might not even live with the right that they can get an interpreter at the court, or at the secretariat, or at an official meeting, because they don't need it or they might not know it...people don't take advantage of these things. I don't think we have this problem"*⁶⁹.

The Vojvodina provincial official describes how the right on mother tongue looks in theory and practice: *"So, there should be executives who speak Hungarian language because according to the constitution and the statutes, each member of the Hungarian ethnic group has the right to address whatever executive body in Subotica or anywhere else where Hungarian is in official use so you can write to them in Hungarian language and receive the answer in Hungarian not a translation but a direct Hungarian communication. Also, any executive procedure for the courts or whatever also in those communities where other languages are also in official use, everybody has the right to ask the procedure is protected in Hungarian or remain and so on. So those are the areas where it is necessary to raise the level of enjoyment because today we have a situation where you have certain rights guaranteed by the constitution and the statutes. But there are some problems on practice, they cannot enjoy this right as they should instead be having the whole procedure; for instance, in Hungarian you have the right to the translator, or interpreter, but it is not the same"*⁷⁰.

However, there are examples of how Hungarians see this dysfunction of the whole system: *"A litigation at the court for instance, interpreters are provided if the judge does not speak Hungarian. So, it has many sides...despite the regulations guaranteeing possibilities, one cannot live such a complete life, as the one who belongs to a majority community; one who does not even think about questions like these... so, the major issue everywhere is that despite the regulations - which might be exceptional but - if these cannot be practiced or cannot be practiced in a certain way...then obviously the minority will suffer from it; and so their inferiority*

⁶⁹ SERB-2.1.2, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, 17 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁷⁰ SERB-3.1.1, Interview with Vojvodina provincial official, Novi Sad, 13 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

will increase”⁷¹. Another interviewee from HNC, who said that *“the language usage rights are in a much worse state than when they were before 1999”*, gave the same example and explained it further: *“Sadly, this means that if the judge who does not speak the minority language, the trial proceeds with an interpreter... This is one of the problems, the other one is that even if the trial at first instance is in Hungarian, the appeal proceedings cannot be in minority language. This means that the judge... must provide the documents in both languages, hence twice the work for the same pay, and because of this the clients dispense with asking the judge to do so. The system has been created in a way that me, a Hungarian nationalist, I dispense with the Hungarian language usage right as it would create further issues for myself and the judge”*⁷².

Besides this, the larger problem that affects more people is related to education in the mother tongue, especially in those rural areas from which people, both majority and minority massively migrate. Yet, the Serbian Hungarians notice double standards: *“Problems can be the opening of classes, or in the matter of the continuation of a class operating in one of the minority languages. The same laws apply for the majority and the minority ethnicities in Serbia, which say that classes can only operate with 15 students or above. However, we tend to find a small gate in every occasion...so we think that positive discrimination should be practiced in education (and in the other HNC areas as well), to make sure that minority classes can operate in the future... Well, yes, the law applies to all of us in the same way. However, there are certain situations, for example in a Serb school in the countryside, a class can be opened with just a few students. The existence of these schools and classes should not be a question. In the case of the minorities, the law says that the national councils must opinionize and approve classes that would operate with less than 15 students”*⁷³.

Regarding the higher education, Hungarians can study in Hungarian in Novi Sad and Subotica, where thanks to Hungarian kin-state support *“the students with Hungarian nationality can receive direct funds which their colleagues - such as Serbs- could only dream about”*⁷⁴. Nevertheless, not so many Hungarians choose this and the reason is again the language: *“The*

⁷¹ SERB-2.1.1, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁷² SERB-2.1.3, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁷³ SERB-2.1.2, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, 17 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁷⁴ SERB-1.1.1, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

Hungarian entry examinations haven't been provided for years. And obviously, this is the reason why only a very few Hungarians get an offer from the university; only those get an offer who come from certain areas (such as Novi Sad or Subotica where all Hungarians speak Serbian). But a child from Topel⁷⁵ doesn't know Serbian. All schools teach Serbian but the students don't learn much of it there. Learning Serbian in everyday life would be more important, which is easy for a child from Novi Sad, but very difficult for those who live in (let's say) Topel⁷⁶. Another perspective that also emphasises the possible consequences: "...if we just have a look at Subotica or near the Tisza where the Hungarians stay, the Szeged University is in 50 kilometres, where all kinds of programs can be found in Hungarian. It is a strategical question what is better for us...the youngsters going to Subotica and continue their studies in Serbian, so by the time they finish primary and secondary school in Hungarian and the university in Serbian, they will possess an excellent knowledge in both languages, and so they stay at home. On the contrary, those who study at Szeged, are already planning to stay away as they would need to naturalise their qualification and still cannot say three sentences in Serbian; consequently, they don't feel equal in this situation⁷⁷.

The number of those who prefer to go to Hungarian universities is devastating, according to one of the HNC representatives: *"Now out of 16 students, 14 are going to Hungary to continue their studies. When we ask the reason why, they mostly say it's the lack of Serbian language skills⁷⁸*. Thus, another issue appears and that is the Serbian language. According to the Vojvodina Hungarians, the methodology of teaching Serbian is not good. However, the HNC also have a strong opinion against certain approaches, which could help, but are not supported: *"If I am told that...for instance the bilingual education seems to be very productive, then I will protest against it, as I think the bilingual education carries the danger of assimilation; mainly from the Hungarian aspect⁷⁹*. Anyway, the situation is as follows: *"The majority thinks of it disdainfully; they think that the Hungarians don't want to talk in Serbian; however, it's not the*

⁷⁵ A town with Hungarian majority, also known as Bačka Topola. A/N

⁷⁶ SERB-2.2.1, Interview with HNC representative, Bačka Topola, 17 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁷⁷ SERB-2.1.1, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁷⁸ SERB-2.3.1, Interview with HNC representative, Bečej, May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁷⁹ SERB-2.1.1, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

*Hungarians' fault but it is the system that does not work*⁸⁰. The interviewees notice that: *"It is a very interesting question as the students learn English really well or even German but not Serbian which is actually taught more times a week than foreign languages. Those who know it better than I do, they say that Serbian isn't taught as a foreign language but as a native language. Now, the HNC wants to change this concept since we see it does not work. It is a very interesting fact that the students learn English really well; simply the methodology isn't adequate"*⁸¹. Also, a representative of HNC concludes that: *"The problem is not that we need to speak in Serbian - because that is absolutely natural as we live in a multilingual community... The problem isn't this, but the youngsters not being able to talk in Serbian is a very big issue"*⁸².

There are other, different perspectives as well and they are related to the employability of those who do not speak Serbian: *"Probably getting a job is a very big problem which isn't only an issue for the majority nation but the minority as well by having serious problems with the lack of Serbian language skills. Only at a very few places in Serbia can someone find a job without speaking the language of the majority. I think it is historical how many Hungarians don't speak Serbian. Even if they do, it is not up to an adequate level"*⁸³. So, the Hungarians who decide to go and study in Hungary, due to poor knowledge of Serbian do not see the perspective of coming back and finding a job: *"No matter where you want a job, you need to speak Serbian; even in Hungarian inhabited areas... They can't work, as everyone needs to speak Serbian for negotiating with businesses, serving customers who don't speak any other languages. Meeting Serbians is unavoidable"*⁸⁴.

The Serbian poor economic situation, which further leads to emigration certainly influences these processes, no matter how hard the state tries to help the minority communities: *"In the last 20-25 years minority citizens from the public sector have been disappearing, not just the Hungarians but citizens of all minorities. Last year, a law passed which reflects positive discrimination: If someone from the majority and also someone from a*

⁸⁰ SERB-3.1.2, Interview with Vojvodina provincial official, Novi Sad, 13 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁸¹ SERB-2.3.1, Interview with HNC representative, Bečej, May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁸² SERB-2.2.1, Interview with HNC representative, Bačka Topola, 17 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁸³ SERB-2.3.1, Interview with HNC representative, Bečej, May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁸⁴ SERB-2.1.3, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

minority community possess the same qualifications and apply for the same council or provincial vacancy, then the minority citizen shall be offered the job. This is positive discrimination”⁸⁵. Nevertheless, this does not seem enough to keep people from migrating. The massive emigration indirectly makes the everyday life of the ones who stay even more complicated: “The biggest problem is that lots of people go abroad and try to find their happiness there either alone or with their whole family. This obviously influences the number of children, students and schools. We need to face it; only a few of us remained here by now. From year to year, the number of students decreases with hundreds in our secondary schools and universities. And we know what it means; so if the number of students decrease, then the teacher’s work is decreasing as well, which slowly leads to the teacher being unemployed, which again leads more people going abroad... We’re trying to encourage the families to stay, also emphasising that working abroad doesn’t always mean one can get a job suiting one’s qualification”⁸⁶.

The conclusion is that the economic situation is a major problem of the Hungarian community, and it is something that they have in common with the majority Serbians. Being preoccupied with the existential problems makes minorities apathetic about other things: *“It means that there isn’t enough money... They don’t complain about the violation of the minority law in such numbers as before, but complain in bigger numbers about matters originating from the state of the economy... The members of the minority communities in such difficult times don’t notice the violation of the minority rights as they are struggling with existential matters and that’s what they complain about. Since quite a few citizens don’t have any pension, of course they don’t care if a Hungarian sign has been knocked off. This is a typical trend”⁸⁷.*

3.1.4 Emigration

The economic situation of a home country indeed plays the main role in the survival of a certain community in their home state. The case of Serbian Hungarians is not an exception.

⁸⁵ SERB-1.1.1, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁸⁶ SERB-2.1.2, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, 17 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁸⁷ SERB-3.1.2, Interview with Vojvodina provincial official, Novi Sad, 13 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

After including all of the other issues described above, as well as the Hungarian kin-state support's 'most powerful' instrument, the dual citizenship, it is clear why emigration is so popular nowadays. It is very difficult to stop this trend: *"Well, the biggest challenge is to keep the youngsters here somehow...to change what is in their heads somehow. They think whatever is here is bad and everything that is beyond the border is good and they just want to leave and continue their lives there. I don't know who the last one will be in the row. If all of those who leave would be successful...but sadly they aren't... From one point of view the population is decreasing naturally, and secondly it is also decreasing because the youngsters are leaving"*⁸⁸.

The dual citizenship helped this whole process and led to a certain contradiction between what the kin-state wants⁸⁹ and what it does. One of the aims is to fight for wider rights and autonomy of Hungarian communities abroad and by doing so, keeping them in their historical lands. But, the right to get dual citizenship showed that Hungarians anyway choose to leave. However, some see also positive sides of this trend: *"...many of the applications for the Hungarian citizenship weren't to migrate but it meant a lot to the people, on a psychological and me[n]tal level. It brought them satisfaction... At the beginning, the Hungarians only applied for it to satisfy their ethnicity feelings but now many of them have already used it to move abroad"*⁹⁰. And that seems to be a common opinion among interviewees: *"Well, despite it being a positive step from the point of how Vojvodina Hungarians feel about their national identity, other aspects need to be mentioned as well. There is not much research, nor many scientific papers published on this subject; however it can be empirically defined that the growing immigration of Hungarians from Vojvodina has a close connection to the possibility of receiving a Hungarian passport"*⁹¹.

The consequences of this can be fatal for the future of the Hungarian community in Serbia, and interviewees are well aware of this: *"The interest of the Hungarian community is that the Vojvodina Hungarians should not receive Hungarian citizenship. 10,000s have already left the country since it is easy to leave and get a job... of course people take an advantage of it.*

⁸⁸ SERB-2.2.1, Interview with HNC representative, Bačka Topola, 17 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁸⁹ Or at least says what it wants.

⁹⁰ SERB-3.1.2, Interview with Vojvodina provincial official, Novi Sad, 13 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁹¹ SERB-1.1.1, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

*The interest of the community isn't equal to the interest of the individual. The personal interest of the people is obviously to leave if they can't make ends meet... Obviously, it would be very difficult to tell anyone that one doesn't have a right to leave but must stay"*⁹². Some even use adjectives as catastrophic to describe the current situation: *"Catastrophic because we are becoming empty. It is great, and we really appreciate the [that] we are welcomed to be Hungarian citizens since our ancestors appeared to have been locked out of their own country; in theory, it is fine. But in practice, since 2008, there has been a decreasing standard of living, people put up with this for a while, but they can't any longer. Thousands of young Hungarians are leaving as there is a huge existential uncertainty; this is the easier way, as working in the EU becomes a possibility for them. And I don't think it will change... We simply have to face that the law is defacto and objective, carrying the death sentence of the Hungarian community here"*⁹³.

Despite the negatives, one positive side still can be seen and the Hungarian government is working hard on it, as part of its kin-state politics. It is related to the economic support of the region and its community: *"In the Carpathians, only Vojvodina succeeded to implement the Economic Development Plan, the '50 billion HUF Plan' as it is mentioned in Hungary. The Hungarian government awarded a support package worth of more than 160 million euro (50 billion HUF) for the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy for Hungarians in Vojvodina. The first round of applications for funding was launched last January, and the second round of funding has already been released too. These are 15 types of funding for entrepreneurs and agricultural producers, which are only for citizens with dual Hungarian and Serb nationality and who live in Vojvodina"*⁹⁴. The results are yet to be seen.

3.2 Discussion

The findings clearly show what are the most important problems of the Hungarian community, seen from their perspective. Some of them are related and to a certain extent

⁹² SERB-1.1.2, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 17 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁹³ SERB-2.1.3, Interview with HNC representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

⁹⁴ SERB-1.1.1, Interview with political party representative, Subotica, 19 May 2016. In: (Smith, 2020)

directly or indirectly caused by Hungarian kin-state support; while the others, more existential ones are the result of Serbian domestic politics and economy.

While these findings are yet to contribute to the study of the matter, the literature on the most important themes was already cited in the previous chapter:

(A) The issues of Hungarian cultural autonomy, specifics of the Vojvodina region, as well as the position of kin-states, can be found in works of Bárdi (2004), Egry (2014), Korhecz (2014), Waterbury (2020), etc; and were cited before. Also, the Hungarian government had a say about it in its Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad (2011), where the case of Vojvodina is singled out as positive.

(B) The political interest of kin-state activism is another topic that is well covered in the literature, especially the one concerning the Hungarian case. A big contribution regarding the political aspects can be found in numerous works of Waterbury (2010) and Pogonyi (2017). The specifics of Vojvodina Hungarians' political parties are mentioned in works of Stjepanović (2018), Herner-Kovács, Illyés, & Rákóczi (2015), Hagan Darin (2009) as well as in numerous newspaper articles and web portals (Trivić, 2018) (Ivković, 2020).

(C) There is not much information about the general, everyday problems of Vojvodina Hungarians. But, the issues that minorities usually face, such as the ones related to mother tongue and education are common in the literature and can be found in already mentioned works of Kymlicka (1995), Csergő & Goldgeier (2001), Kántor (2006), Kapitány (2015), etc.

(D) Finally, the most important issue that includes to a certain extent all the others is emigration, with all its consequences. In the literature, there are various works on the survival of ethnic Hungarian communities and they are analysed previously as well. The most relevant information is provided by Bárdi (2013), Wimmer (2013), Kapitány (2015), etc. Since the topic is ongoing, many online news articles are also available, while some of them are mentioned earlier (Keller-Alánt, 2020).

The judgment that can be made is that these issues are causally related and interconnected. Therefore, they can be presented through a story: Hungary, a kin-state that is an important, EU neighbour of poorer Serbia requires wider autonomy for its ethnic kin. Serbia wants to prove its democratic development as part of its EU integration process⁹⁵. So, it provides the Hungarian community (as well as other ones) with the (Hungarian) National Council, an institute that protects the rights, language, and culture of the Hungarian minority and it is run by individuals elected by the Hungarian community. But, the act on HNC has some flaws and the financial support is not enough. HNC also serves as a link between Serbian and Hungarian states and allows the funding from the Hungarian government, which pulls Serbian Hungarians even closer to Budapest. This considerable funding is distributed through the most supported group of Hungarians in Serbia, the minority political party VMSZ. One of the main purposes of Hungarian kin-state support is the political influence, so maintaining the good ties with the leading Serbian Hungarian political party is of mutual interest. On the other hand, these individuals and groups who do not support VMSZ struggle and feel that they are left on the margins. The polarisation among Hungarians as well as the efforts from Budapest to dominate and control minority elites, pushes VMSZ also closer to the Serbian leading political party, making them part of the elite and the Serbian Parliament. Meanwhile, ordinary Hungarians deal with existential problems and put them way in front of the problems related to the possible violation of their minority rights. In general, they do not feel discriminated, but the improvements in mother tongue use and education still should be made, as well as the methodology of teaching the Serbian language in schools, especially in the areas where Hungarians live homogeneously. The education and usage of minority language rights are closely connected to the number of Hungarians living in the area. And on this field, Hungarians do not do so well, since many of them left and still are constantly leaving for Hungary and other EU countries. The main reason for wide Hungarian emigration is the economic situation in non-EU Serbia and difficulties when finding employment. While the main tool that helps Hungarian emigration is the dual citizenship right, which they can and do obtain thanks to Hungarian kin-state support. Hungary's goal is to keep Hungarians in their historical lands, so they constantly

⁹⁵ Along with, being pressured domestically by different national minorities and externally pressured by the EU and the CoE to develop the new legal-institutional framework of minority protection.

increase the level of funding intended for the economic prosperity of the regions where Hungarians live, being aware that this is the most effective way to stop economic migration. Hence, everything starts and finishes with Hungarian kin-state support. Nevertheless, certain contradictions are evident, such as the fact that Hungary wants to keep Hungarians in Vojvodina and give them non-resident citizenship, which also allows them to vote and bring Hungarian leading party political profit; it instead leads to massive Hungarian emigration, whose consequences are will be more and more obvious in years to come.

Chapter 4 CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this research, four research questions and four hypotheses were suggested. To draw an overall conclusion, it is necessary to look at all of them again and give the answers obtained through the thorough analysis of primary and secondary data. The overall conclusion will be followed by the recommendations, which represent the ultimate, inseparable part of this research analysis.

4.1 The purpose of Hungarian kin-state support

The kin-state support/activism/politics is a very complex phenomenon, and the case of Hungary represents a very interesting one. Hungary used to be a very big country in the European context, but historical developments led to territorial changes and left many Hungarians on the other side of the border. The concept of the Hungarian nation has been on the agenda for a long time and the period under communism just increased the importance of its promotion. The post-communist period built the foundation of the kin-state politics that exist today. The main purpose of Hungarian kin-state support can be divided into two groups: the general, well-known ones such as helping the compatriots in the neighbouring countries, by allocating certain financial resources for the preservation and protection of the unique Hungarian culture and language abroad; and also another, less evident one, which is driven by political interests. Moreover, under Fidesz governments the official term for kin-state politics has become 'nemzetpolitika' (national policy) referring to the idea that the government has managed to 'unify' the nation across borders. So in a nutshell, they no longer speak about kin minorities, just parts of the unitary (ethnic-cultural) nation which has been now also institutionalized (status law, dual citizenship, etc.). Numerous examples testify the argument that the main tacit purpose behind such wide Hungarian kin-state support is the political benefit. Fidesz managed to identify this on time and positioned itself as a leader in this means of a political game. The right decisions regarding Status Law, as well as amendments on non-resident Citizenship and Voting Laws, played a major role in establishing the political

dominance that it holds since 2010. Fidesz was very direct, determined, and did not waste time when it came to these decisions. Orbán was the best in cherry-picking of the both, cultural-linguistic and political benefits that came with the support of ethnic kin. He and his party promote nationalism and enjoy the support of both, internal and external voters. The political aspect of Hungarian kin-state support helped Fidesz to keep its ethnic kin as close to Budapest as possible.

4.2 The types of Hungarian kin-state support

Hungary offers multiple benefits to its ethnic kin. The more important it was for ruling parties to keep Hungarians abroad loyal to kin-state, the more powerful benefits were introduced. The history of Hungarian kin-state activism can be divided into two periods that include Fidesz's rule: the pre-2010 and post-2010's period. Both periods are characterised by the expansion of kin-state activism when some of the milestones occurred. The earlier period introduced a very controversial Status Law and the establishment of The Hungarian Standing Conference. Some of the neighbouring countries were afraid that the Status Law will allow Hungary to influence another state's sovereignty. However, the most valuable benefit that was offered through Status Law was the Hungarian identity card, which allowed Hungarians from neighbouring countries to enter Hungary without a visa, but also provided them with a wide range of opportunities, such as education grants, work permits, access to health care and social security, etc. They could technically apply for the same state benefits as Hungarians from Hungary. The later period brought the Hungarian identity card to the highest level. Immediately upon the return to power, Fidesz adopts the law on non-resident dual citizenship and voting rights and makes the process of gaining it so easy. This was welcomed by the vast majority of Hungarians abroad since for many this did not only mean the Hungarian passport, but also the EU one. And by gaining the voting rights, ethnic Hungarians officially got the opportunity to shape Hungarian internal political life. By late 2017 already one million ethnic Hungarians gained non-resident citizenship. The fact that also non-Hungarians are applying for dual

citizenship testifies how powerful this type of kin-state support is. Besides these, Hungary also invests a lot of resources in the economy, education, and culture of its kin-minority communities abroad.

4.3 The main issues of Vojvodina Hungarians

Primary data showed that the issues of Vojvodina Hungarians can be divided into four groups. The ones related to autonomy, politics, language and education; and finally emigration. But, the most dominant one that shapes all the others is the economy of their home state. The autonomy is established through the Hungarian National Council, which is primarily financed by Hungary. The HNC is representative of its minority body, but, it is impotent in terms of decision making. Hungarian politics in Vojvodina are largely VMSZ oriented, due to its obvious dominance and support that enjoys from both, SNS and Fidesz. This leads to dissatisfaction of their political opponents, who feel as a 'minority within a minority'. Some of the general issues are related to the mother tongue usage and the need for more support in this field. Additionally, the lack of knowledge of the Serbian language is something that Vojvodina Hungarians face. This makes them less employable, thus turns them further towards Hungary and the EU labour market. The more Hungarians leave Serbia, the more difficult is for the remaining ones to enjoy more opportunities regarding education in their mother tongue. Nevertheless, all these issues seem to be in a background of existential problems that minority face. In this situation, they are not in any different situation than the majority. The difference is that Hungarians can use their dual citizenship and leave.

4.4 Overall conclusion: The reality of Hungarian kin-state support

The analysis and comparison of primary and secondary data showed that the most important issues of Hungarian kin-minority in Serbia are not solved by kin-state support, but only worsen in some cases or simply postponed. The Hungarian political life in Vojvodina is to

some extent corrupted by higher political interests, while the possibility to obtain Hungarian citizenship leads to massive emigration, which does not necessarily solve the main issues, but just move them somewhere else. One of the initial and basic aims of Hungarian kin-state activism is to keep ethnic Hungarians in their historical lands surrounding Hungary. But, over time the level of Hungarian kin-state support was increasing and led to a contradictory situation today. When taking into account all of the interests behind the Hungarian kin state support, a certain 'enchanted' circle is being formed. First, Hungary emphasises the importance of ethnic kin, stressing out its actual ethnic affiliation and decides to invest resources in its cultural preservation and survival in countries across the state border. Then, the Hungarian elite realises the political potential of the loyalty of non-resident Hungarians and offers numerous benefits to ethnic kin which pulls it closer to the kin-state and brings political points. So, it gradually increases the level of support by offering dual citizenship and voting rights, which strengthen the ties and political power. But, the dual citizenship also opens the door for the economic migration, so the survival of ethnic kin abroad is endangered, so it is the control that kin-state used to have in these areas. After realising that its political appetites led to the situation such as this, the Hungarian government starts investing more resources in the economic development of kin-minority communities, which is supposed to keep them in their home state. The conclusion that can be drawn is that there is a difference between how each side of the kin-state-support-medal coin seems from two perspectives, what are the expectations and ultimate aims. Thus, it is very important to take into account what matters to ethnic kin and according to that shape, the kin-state politics, since their existence and success primarily depend on kin-minority.

Regarding the suggested hypotheses, the conclusion is that: It is valid that (H1) The more the kin-state support focuses on political interests, the more of actual issues of (Vojvodina Hungarian) minority are unsolved; It is also valid that (H2) The more issues a minority faces in the home country, the more support it expects from kin-state; Another mostly valid one is (H3) The more the minority relies on and uses the support of a kin-state, the more likely is to be caught in the middle between the kin-state and home state. And finally, (H4) The more privileges kin-state support offers to its minority in another country, the more is the

minority encouraged to leave the home state, is valid. The overall analysis proved that all four hypotheses can be considered valid.

4.5 Recommendations

Regarding the recommendations, they are primarily addressed to Hungary. To practice kin-state politics successfully, it is necessary to sometimes put politics aside and consider the actual position and matters of the ethnic community as a whole, not only elites; since the decisions are supposed to benefit everyone equally. It seems that the right approach is to invest in kin-minority future by improving their economic situation within the home state. Also, the overall status of the minority can be significantly better if the minority community focuses more on its integration in the home country than to the constant maintenance of a rather dependent relationship with its kin-state. Finally, the strengthening of bilateral relationships with neighbouring countries can significantly improve the status of the remaining Hungarian kin-minority community, but only after the actual problems of the community are taken into the consideration.

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