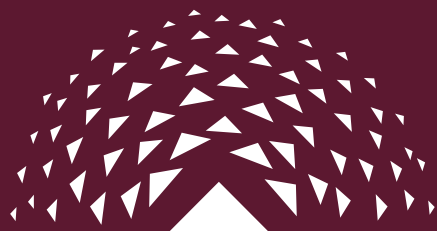


**Past and Present Developments  
of the Hungarian–Slovak Minority Joint Committee**

A magyar–szlovák kisebbségi vegyes bizottság  
munkájának korábbi és jelenlegi fejleményei

**CSILLA VARGA**



---

# KKI Studies

Series of the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade

Publisher:

Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade

Editing and typesetting:

Tamás Lévárt

Editorial office:

H-1016 Budapest, Bérc utca 13-15.

Tel.: + 36 1 279-5700

Fax: + 36 1 279-5701

E-mail: [info@ifat.hu](mailto:info@ifat.hu)

<http://kki.hu>

© Csilla Varga, 2018

© Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018

ISSN 2064-9460



**Abstract:** Generally speaking, the protection of and dealing with national minorities can be achieved in three ways: on a multilateral, a bilateral and a domestic level. The multilateral scope includes the activity of international bodies, often urged by several states devoted to the issue. At the domestic level, countries can secure rights for national minorities living on their territory based on their approach concerning them. The present paper<sup>1</sup>, however, examines the bilateral scope of cooperation in favor of national minorities which can be achieved through bilateral treaties, agreements and institutionally, in case of Hungary and its neighboring countries, through the work of joint minority committees.

**Összefoglalás:** A nemzeti kisebbségek védelme általánosságban háromféle módon valósítható meg: multilaterális, bilaterális és nemzeti szinten. A multilaterális hatáskör a nemzetközi szervezetek tevékenységét foglalja magába, mely nyilvánvalóan azon országok által támogatott, melyek kiállnak az ott élő kisebbségek érdekei mellett. Nemzeti szinten az államok, az ott élő kisebbségi csoportokhoz való viszonyulásuk szerint, különböző jogokat vagy többletjogokat biztosíthatnak, azonban ennek ellentéte is előfordulhat. Jelen tanulmány a nemzeti kisebbségvédelem bilaterális módját vizsgálja Magyarország és a szomszédos országok vonatkozásában, ezen belül pedig kimondottan az országok közötti kétoldalú szerződések által létrehozott kisebbségi vegyes bizottságok munkáján keresztül.

## INTRODUCTION

Minority protection of national minorities is a debated issue, and it often causes disagreement on a larger scale among Central- and Eastern European countries. The present paper uses the term 'national minority' to refer to those groups that live on the territory of a host-state, but are simultaneously ethnic kins of the other, often neighboring, kin-state<sup>2</sup> as well. Ethnic minorities are in most cases historically, emotionally and ethnically connected to that particular kin-state maintaining in most cases wide-ranging relations with it. Consequently, the rights and position of national minorities have

1 Csilla Varga is a PhD candidate of the International Relations Multidisciplinary Doctoral School of the Corvinus University and associate of the Office of Ministerial Commissioner Responsible for Developing Neighbourhood Policy of Hungary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

2 In Europe the borders of states do not coincide with the lines of ethnic communities which means that a great number of states in Europe are homelands of both ethnic majorities and ethnic minorities. Kin-states are those states that pursue policies aimed at their co-ethnic groups living in another European state, being the "mother state" of a given nationality which belongs to the minority in the other state but it is the majority of the kin-state.

to be distinguished from the situation of new, migrant minorities; however, this difference is often neglected even on European minority politics' level and on experts' forums.<sup>3</sup>

Traditional national minority groups got into minority position as a part of a different nation because of border changes; they are part of a spontaneous mass migration, or subject to organized resettlement of people, for instance. They possess dual identity as far as their traditions, culture, history and language differs from the one of the host society, but ideally, they also integrate at some level to the society of the home country. Collective rights of these minorities should be respected and the identity, language, culture, customs, etc. should be preserved not only because in many cases these minorities got into minority position without their consent, but also because their language, culture and other features are valuable assets to be protected. As every person, members of minority groups are entitled to basic human rights, such as the right to identity, defined by international minority rights instruments as an inalienable fundamental right<sup>4</sup>.

According to Brubaker, nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe can be characterized by a triad linking the national minorities (1), the newly nationalizing states in which they live (2) and the external national homelands (3) to which they belong by ethnocultural affinity. National minorities are affected by the nationalism of nationalizing states in which they live and by the external national homelands to which they belong by ethnonational affinity though not by legal citizenship. Minorities have their own nationalism and they make claims on the grounds of their nationality. National homelands monitor the condition, promote the welfare, support the activities and institutions, assert the rights, and protect the interests of 'their' ethnonational kin in other states, mostly in cases when the ethnonational kin in question is seen as threatened by the nationalizing policies and practices of the state in which they live.<sup>5</sup> This statement applies for the Hungarian state as well and it is often highlighted by the government that the support of permanence and prosperity of Hungarians living outside of Hungary, taking responsibility for their present and future is one of the main priorities of the Hungarian state.

3 The most often used definition of the term 'minority' was formulated by Francesco Capotorti, Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, stating that the minority is "a group which is numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State and in a non-dominant position, whose members possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the rest of the population and who, if only implicitly, maintain a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language." (The Protection of Minorities under Multilateral Agreements on Human Rights. The Italian Yearbook of International Law (1976), II, 14 and idem, Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Geneva UN Center for Human Rights, UN Doc E/CN.4/Sub.2/384/Add.1-7.).

4 See for instance the OHCHR International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 1; CSCE Helsinki Final Act, Title VII; the Document of the Copenhagen meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, paragraph (32); the UN Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Article 3; the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Article 1.

5 Brubaker, 1996.



In Central-Europe, historical and political reasons make the issue of national minority communities more delicate. As for the relations of the Hungarian state with its neighbors, most of the country's bilateral treaties<sup>6</sup> came into existence in the 1990s, incorporating the rights of, and dealing with national minorities on both sides. The common feature of treaties of cooperation and good neighborly relations with Ukraine, Slovenia, Croatia, the Slovak Republic and Romania was the mutual recognition of borders, but some of the treaties contain several provisions on the protection of national minorities<sup>7</sup> as well as other areas of cooperation. The mentioned basic treaties set up, inter alia, joint minority committees (JMC) in six neighboring countries, except Austria (a basic treaty was not concluded between the two countries). The basic task of these joint committees is for the two parties to reach agreement on issues concerning national minorities living on the territory of the first party, but nationally belonging to the nation of the kin-state, the other party.

The paper focuses on the operation, past and present work of the Hungarian–Slovakian Joint Minority Committee that has started from the year 1999, from its constitutional meeting.

#### *The operation of joint minority committees in general*

As it was mentioned, the establishment of JMCs is based on the basic treaties between Hungary and the neighboring states. Ideally, the members of joint committees meet on an annual basis in order to reach agreement on different issues and projects in connection with national minorities living in both countries. Prior to these meetings, a draft protocol is prepared based on recommendations of the Parties, negotiated with the domestic participants of the Committee on both sides. The final version of protocol is accepted at the JMC meeting where it can still be modified, approved and signed by both parties, but in case of disagreement, it can be rejected as well. In several countries, signed protocols become part of domestic law adopted by ministerial decrees and imposing binding measures on the appointed responsible bodies.

6 Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and Ukraine (Szerződés a jószomszédság és az együttműködés alapjairól a Magyar Köztársaság és Ukrajna között, 1991); Treaty between the Republic of Hungary and Republic of Croatia on friendship and cooperation (Szerződés a Magyar Köztársaság és a Horvát Köztársaság között a baráti kapcsolatokról és együttműködésről, 1992); Treaty between the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Slovenia on friendship and cooperation (Szerződés a Magyar Köztársaság és a Szlovén Köztársaság közötti baráti kapcsolatokról és együttműködésről, 1992); Treaty on good neighborhood relations and friendly cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and the Slovak Republic (Szerződés a Magyar Köztársaság és a Szlovák Köztársaság között a jószomszédi kapcsolatokról és a baráti együttműködésről, 1995); Treaty of understanding, cooperation and good neighborhood relations between Romania and Hungary (Szerződés a Magyar Köztársaság és Románia között a megértésről, az együttműködésről és a jószomszédságról, 1996.); Treaty between Hungary and Serbia and Montenegro on the protection of rights of the Hungarian minority living in Serbia and Montenegro, and the Serbian minority living in the Republic of Hungary (Magyar Köztársaságban élő szerb kisebbség és a Szerb Köztársaságban élő magyar kisebbség védelméről szóló kisebbségvédelmi egyezmény, 2003).

7 Bíró, 1999.

In the followings, the history and objectives of the Hungarian–Slovakian Joint Minority Committee will be analyzed from its beginnings until this day. From the first year of operation, 1999, and until 2017 thirteen meetings were held by the Slovak–Hungarian JMC and based on these negotiations twelve protocols were accepted (the only protocol not accepted was the one discussed at the 12th meeting). This paper focuses on several realized and also non-achieved objectives or problematic issues between the two countries highlighted in the given protocol of the meeting. Since the establishment of the JMC was formulated in the 1995 Hungarian–Slovakian Basic Treaty<sup>8</sup>, first this document will be briefly presented.

### *The Hungarian-Slovakian Basic Treaty*

In the early 1990s, the Hungarian state signed several bilateral treaties with the neighboring countries, in the first round with Slovenia, Croatia and Ukraine. In these first years, Slovakia and Romania opposed to sign a treaty because of the disagreement on the issue of autonomy and minority rights. For this reason, the Hungarian–Slovakian Basic Treaty was only signed in March 1995, mainly due to international pressure, as both states were candidate countries of NATO accession. However, the Treaty secured a limited number of minority rights that the Slovak government failed to put into practice.<sup>9</sup>

According to the preamble of the Treaty, for instance, the Parties recognized that persons belonging to national minorities constitute an integral part of the society of the state where they live and contribute to deepen the trust, friendship and cooperation between the two countries. For the mentioned reasons, the Parties take responsibility to protect these minorities, promoting to preserve and deepen the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of these minorities living on their territory. Furthermore, persons belonging to the Slovakian minority living in Hungary and to the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia have the right to use their mother tongue freely in private and public life, orally and in writing, *individually or collectively with the members of their group*.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to mention that there was a common feature in Slovakian and Romanian attitude to the protection of national minorities: the fear from group (collective) rights and any form of autonomy. Both basic treaties speak of “persons belonging to the national minorities,” and not of minorities as such, although both treaties recognize the above-mentioned fact that national minorities constitute an integral part of the society of the state where they live.<sup>11</sup>

8 Szerződés a Magyar Köztársaság és a Szlovák Köztársaság között a jószomszédi kapcsolatokról és a baráti együttműködésről, 1995. március 19. (Treaty on good neighborhood relations and friendly cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and the Slovak Republic, 19 March 1995).

9 Fiala-Butora, 2013.

10 Basic Treaty, Article 15 (2) (g)

11 Jeszenszky, 1996.



According to Article 15 of the Basic Treaty, the Contracting Parties, in order to meet the objectives set out in the Treaty, establish the Joint Minority Committee in order to make recommendations on crucial issues. The JMC is composed of members appointed by the Parties considered to play important advisory role during the negotiations.<sup>12</sup> The Treaty also stipulates, *inter alia*, that the Contracting Parties strengthen the atmosphere of tolerance and understanding among their citizens with different ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background, and in connection with their obligations under international law, they ensure effective and equal legal protection on their territory for all people regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, political and other opinion, nationality or social origin.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, it is confirmed by the Parties that the protection of national minorities and the protection of the fundamental freedoms belonging to this group forms an integral part of the international protection of human rights, and so it belongs to the framework of international cooperation. In this sense, it does not fall into the domestic jurisdiction of a state and it forms a part of the legitimate concern of the international community.<sup>14</sup>

In general, the signing of the Basic Treaty has not brought radical changes into the life of the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia. In the same year, 1995, the Slovak government adopted the Law on State Language largely restricting the use of minority languages.

Paradoxically, after the conclusion of the Basic Treaty, relations between Hungary and Slovakia started to worsen. The work of the third Mečiar government between 1994–1998 was characterized by radical restriction of minority rights for the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia. On the initiative of the Slovak National Party (SNS), restrictive measures were adopted in education and language policies, causing disagreement and animosity between the Slovak and Hungarian nationals and in inter-state relations, also preventing the development of the Hungarian culture.

Changes occurred only after the Slovak parliamentary elections in 1998 when the new government represented a more understanding point of view towards minority issues. The Party of the Hungarian Coalition became member of the government undertaking the representation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. In order to implement the objectives of the Basic Treaty Parties, as indicated in the protocol on evaluation of the implementation of the Basic Treaty signed on 24 November 1998, established 11 joint committees covering the most important policy areas between the two states (including the minority issue as well).<sup>15</sup> The work of the Joint Minority Committee started from the following year.

12 Basic Treaty, Article 15 (6).

13 Basic Treaty, Article 14.

14 Basic Treaty, Article 15 (1).

15 Kelemen, 2007.

## THE WORK OF THE JOINT MINORITY COMMITTEE BETWEEN 1999-2017

From the year 1999 until the end of 2017, the Parties organized thirteen meetings of the JMC. Before 2002, the two co-chairs of the Committee were delegated by the Slovak and Hungarian Foreign Ministries. The Committee was made up of office holders from different ministries and representatives of Hungarian and Slovak minorities making proposals for the draft protocols. In case of accepted protocols, countries' governments decide within their own competence, in the form of government decree, about the responsible bodies and ministries for timely realization of the objectives. Evidently, the government can refuse the fulfillment of joint committee recommendations.<sup>16</sup>

The described process is more complex than it appears at a first sight: to reach an agreement between the two national sides may cause occasional difficulties because of differing interests. The committee meeting may refuse previously agreed recommendations or even the whole proposal (or it may adopt it as well, of course). However, it is highly possible that the process will stagnate or will be blocked. In case of Hungarian–Slovakian relations the twelve signed protocols indicate that the cooperative attitude has reached a higher level between the two countries, but it may also be the case that the wording of pursued objectives is quite general or the parties postponed the realization of several aims. However, it is a considerable success that in Hungary and Slovakia all signed protocols were transposed into the domestic legal system in the form of government decisions.

As regards the composition of the JMC, the general practice is that, on the part of the Slovakian minority living in Hungary, the president of the Slovak National Minority Self-Government and, from the year 2014, the parliamentary minority spokesperson takes part in Committee meetings as part of the Hungarian delegation. Currently, the list is complemented with the representative of the Party of the Hungarian Community (MKP), the Hungarian party operating in Slovakia, as political reasons make its participation impossible in the Slovak delegation of the Committee. On the part of the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia, the four representatives of the Most–Híd civic party belong to the Slovakian delegation. The Basic Treaty does not regulate who should represent the Hungarian and Slovak minority in the Committee, therefore it seems to be a valid question whether the mentioned minority members of the JMC are legitimate representatives of minorities. It is undeniable that they are participants of the "leading edge" of Hungarian and Slovak politics, however members of other minority organizations (e.g. Hungarian Social and Educational Association in Slovakia – Csemadok; Alliance of Hungarian Pedagogues in Slovakia – SZMPSZ; Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia – Szlovákiai Magyarok Kerekasztala; etc.) could professionally also shed light on several crucial issues in case they were representatives of minorities in the Committee.

16 Sidó, Fiala, Vincze and Jarábik, 2003.





### *The constitutional meeting of the JMC*

The first meeting of the JMC was held on 8 February 1999 in Budapest with the two co-chairs Zsolt Németh, Parliamentary State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary and Ján Figel', State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic.<sup>17</sup> In the first protocol the Committee recommended, for instance, the support of Hungarian university departments operating in Slovakia and Slovak university departments in Hungary; to resolve the parliamentary representation of national minorities in Hungary; to secure the possibility of native language education of certain professions in Slovakia and of the teaching of Slovak language in minority schools in Hungary; and so on.

Besides the text of the protocol, a Memorandum was attached to the document. In its text, the Parties, proclaim *inter alia* that in order to preserve the European cultural values they will cooperate for the protection of the rights of Hungarians living in Slovakia and Slovaks living in Hungary. Knowing that national minorities form an integral and valuable part of the society and of the state, the work of the Committee facilitates and secures the conditions necessary for preservation, expression and development of the identity of people belonging to the Hungarian national minority living in Slovakia and the Slovak national minority living in Hungary.

In the protocol of the first committee meeting, the Parties formulated their common aims rather modestly and a relatively small number of exact recommendations were laid down. This is mainly due to the fact that cooperation was in the initial phase under the aegis of the JMC and the Parties tried to define the objectives and competencies of the Commission in the first place. Furthermore, the Slovak parliamentary elections in September 1998 brought changes to the domestic political structure. The MKP (Magyar Koalíció Pártja/Party of the Hungarian Coalition), for instance, became part of the coalition government causing positive development in Hungarian–Slovak relations. The political climate changed, and the aim of the Parties was to reach an agreement and to improve their relations at different levels, including at the JMC meetings.

### *The second meeting of the JMC*

In the same year, the Parties held their second meeting on 29 September in Bratislava. The recommendations of the first meeting were accepted by the Slovak and Hungarian governments and transposed into their domestic legal system through government decisions appointing the proper ministries responsible for the implementation (as it was the case with the protocols of forthcoming meetings as well). The second protocol<sup>18</sup> states that in the foreground of the foreign and domestic policy of both Parties stands the development of the European integration and good neighborhood relations, and, *inter alia*, the improvement of the situation

17 Protocol on the constitutional meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 8 February 1999.

18 Protocol on the second meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 29 September 1999.

of minorities. The Hungarian Party acknowledges that the Slovak government has made great efforts and concrete steps for the remedy of the violation of minority rights committed by the previous government, however it also expresses regret that an appropriate legal framework for the use of minority languages has not been established yet which could be accepted by the political representation of the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia. The Slovak Party is convinced that the law on the use of minority languages is an important step towards the improvement of the situation of national minorities, and it fulfills constitutional requirements.

It can be observed, however, that the Parties assess certain issues differently, particularly the Law on the Use of Languages of National Minorities adopted by the Slovak government in 1999, mentioned by the protocol as well. The Slovak party considers the Law as an important step towards the improvement of the situation of minorities, but the legislative process was due to EU pressure, rather than the Slovak state's own initiative. According to the Hungarian state and the representatives of Hungarian minority living in Slovakia, the Law contains several disadvantageous provision for national minorities and does not reflect most of the aims of the Hungarian side. According to it, on the settlements where the number of inhabitants belonging to a national minority reaches at least 15 % of the population based on two consecutive censuses, the minority language can be used in the offices of the municipality.<sup>19</sup> It basically means that a minority-language application addressed to an office is answered on the same minority language; names of public institutions and places can be indicated in minority language as well; meetings of the local government can be held in minority language.<sup>20</sup> However, the Law does not exactly specify the offices falling under the jurisdiction of the mentioned article. Furthermore, minority language application forms are mostly not available in these offices. The Law does not define the obligations of the State accurately, for instance it is not obliged to employ a minority language-speaking employee in the mentioned offices either.<sup>21</sup> There is no common understanding whether the threshold of 15% rates are low or high in connection with the number of minorities. One of the most obvious problems is, however, that categories such as nationality and language use often do not overlap. In case of minorities living in Slovakia, it is observable that the number of people having a given native language is higher than the number of people belonging to the given nationality.<sup>22</sup> Based on the results of the 2011 Slovakian census 458 467 people (8,5% of the population) belong to the Hungarian nationality, but 508 714 people (9,4%) has Hungarian as their native language.<sup>23</sup>

19 Act 184/1999 on the language use of national minorities, paragraph 2 (1): "Ak občania Slovenskej republiky, ktorí sú osobami patriacimi k národnostnej menšine a majú trvalý pobyt v danej obci, tvoria podľa dvoch po sebe nasledujúcich sčítaníach obyvateľov v obci najmenej 15 % obyvateľov, majú právo v tejto obci používať v úradnom styku jazyk menšiny."

20 Ibid., paragraph 2 (3).

21 Szabó Mihály, 2006.

22 Vass, 2013.

23 *Hungarian Databank of Slovakia*, 2018, Table 1.



In Slovakia the minority language administration has not developed in the post-WWII period from a linguistic and methodological point of view. Acts were not translated, names of offices and legal institutions were used in Slovakian, the legal terminology was not used in the languages of minorities, it was available only in Slovak. Against this background, the 1999 Law was approved as a response to international pressure. For its implementation, however, the Slovak state did not take steps in practice since, in order to introduce the proper conditions for the use of minority languages in offices, linguistic and methodological help is needed. The mentioned offices are not able to realize these aims on their own, since bilingual authentic instruments have not been prepared to this day.<sup>24</sup>

#### *The third meeting of the JMC*

The subsequent meeting of the JMC was held on 30 March 2001 in Budapest where the Parties, for the sake of more efficient functioning of the JMC, agreed on several guidelines laid down in the preamble of the protocol.<sup>25</sup> In the future the JMC holds its meetings as necessary, but at least once a year.

The protocol mentions the successfully realized projects of the first and second meeting, for instance the Hungarian Party ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ECLSG) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), and the Slovak Party also accepted and ratified the ECLSG and signed the ECRML. The prime ministers of Slovakia and Hungary have signed the inter-governmental agreement on the reconstruction of the bridge between Esztergom and Štúrovo on the 16 September 1999 and the works have started with the help of a Phare program. The legal regulation of language use of national minorities also comes up as an achieved aim by the Slovak state in the protocol as well, mentioning that the Slovak Parliament adopted the Act 184/1999 on the language use of national minorities living in Slovakia. According to the Slovak governmental program the legal personality of Hungarian minority cultural institutions was re-established from 1 April 1999.

The objectives reached at the second meeting are named in the protocol as well, referring to the fact that the participation of minority representatives in the work of Hungarian–Slovakian joint committees has largely been fulfilled.

#### *The fourth meeting of the JMC*

The meeting was organized on 5 June 2003 in Bratislava where the Parties have noted that the operation of the Committee contributes to the strengthening of objectives of both countries to integrate into the scheme of the European Union, of regional cooperation, of good neighborly relations, also trying to secure the further development of the situation of minorities living on their territory<sup>26</sup>.

24 Fiala-Butora, 2012.

25 Protocol on the third meeting of the Hungarian–Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 30 March 2001.

26 Protocol on the fourth meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Bratislava, 5 June 2003.



Parties undertake to help, with the assistance of professionals of both countries, the continuous publication of Slovak laws in Hungarian and of Hungarian laws in Slovak, in particular the publication of the EU law. However, it has to be added that the EU states are obliged to publish EU laws in any case without explicitly stating it in other documents.

In Slovakia, the first Hungarian electronic corpus juris started to function in 2016<sup>27</sup>, after thirteen years the recommendation was made, thanks to the translation work of the Pro Civis Civic Association. The collection was a major accomplishment in the broader region in the sense that in neighboring countries similar attempts have not been made amongst the Hungarian minority. The Association started its work in 2011 with the translation of the Slovak Constitution. Since then approximately 65 acts and 220 additional protocols can be found on the website complemented by certain versions of the mentioned acts. Since the acts are constantly changing, the corpus is steadily expanding as well. According to the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages, it would be the responsibility of the State to do the work of the mentioned Association; however, it is not the case in Slovakia because the state does not give concrete substance to the minority language law.<sup>28</sup> The associates of the NGO cooperation forum, Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia (Szlovákiai Magyarok Kerekasztala) also work on the translation of Slovak acts into Hungarian<sup>29</sup>. Most of the translation work was accomplished in the year 2011 as it is seen on their website containing the translated legal texts, and their legal assistance work is in action.

In Hungary a database translating Hungarian legal acts to Slovak did not come into being until now; Hungarian laws are mostly not presented in Slovak language. However, the state could guarantee the translation of Hungarian laws to Slovak automatically with the involvement of representatives of the Slovak national minority, with the help of the Slovak National Minority Self-Government, for instance.

### *The fifth meeting of the JMC*

After the accession of Slovakia and Hungary to the European Union on 1 May 2004, the next Committee meeting was held on the 15 November 2005 in Budapest. The first section of the protocol<sup>30</sup> mentions that the Parties share the opinion that the EU membership positively influences their cooperation as far as the European framework for the enforcement of rights of persons belonging to national minorities was strengthened in both countries and possibilities keeping regular contacts with the kin-state have been broadened.

One example of cooperation, as highlighted by the protocol, was the Agreement between the Governments of Hungary and Slovakia on the mutual educational and cultural support of national minorities signed by the foreign ministers

27 Törvénytár, 2015.

28 Gömörilap, 2016.

29 *Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia*, 2018.

30 Protocol on the fifth meeting of the Hungarian–Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 15 November 2005.



on 12 December 2003 in Brussels. According to Article 1 of the Agreement,<sup>31</sup> Slovakia can support the preservation and development of linguistic and cultural identity of Slovak national minority living in Hungary, and Hungary can also relate to the Hungarian national minority living in Slovakia in the same manner.<sup>32</sup>

Since the fourth meeting of the JMC, the Act on national minorities living in Hungary and the administrative law was also modified by the Hungarian state. The Act 77/1993 on the rights of national and ethnic minorities was modified with the Act 114/2005 on the election of national minority self-government representatives and on the modification of certain acts concerning national and ethnic minorities<sup>33</sup>. The 1993 Act widely defines the rights of national minorities in Hungary around a considerable number of areas. The scope of the Act covers Hungarian nationals living on the territory of Hungary who consider themselves belonging to a national or ethnic minority and their communities. The Acts prohibits the discrimination, assimilation, exclusion, isolation of these minorities; the alteration of national or ethnic relations of the territories inhabited by national minorities; the persecution of a minority group or of a person belonging to this group, the hampering of their living conditions, the impediment of exercising their rights; the aggressive expulsion or relocation of the minority group<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, the Act declares the possibility for national minorities to establish minority self-governments in order to represent the interests of certain minority with the exercise of legally defined powers. The legal status, rights, obligations, structure, operational conditions, specific rules for administration and management; the relations between central state bodies, local governments and minority self-governments are defined by the Act as well<sup>35</sup>. A considerable part of the new recommendations refers to the previously highlighted areas formulated in the first section of the fifth protocol calling on the further realization of ongoing activities.

#### *The sixth meeting of the JMC*

After the parliamentary elections in Slovakia and Hungary, the forthcoming JMC meeting was held on the 22 September 2006 in Bratislava. Parties were pleased to note<sup>36</sup> that issues concerning the support of national minorities are included into the new governments' programs in both countries being in conformity with European values and norms of national minority protection.

31 Regulation 44/2009 of the Hungarian Government on the publication of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and Republic of Slovakia on the mutual educational and cultural support of national minorities, Article 1.

32 Regulation 44/2009, Article 2.

33 Act 114/2005 on the election of national minority self-government representatives and on the modification of certain acts concerning national and ethnic minorities.

34 Act 114/2005, para. 30.

35 Act 114/2005, para. 31.

36 Protocol on the sixth meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Bratislava, 22 September 2006.



As concerns the relations between the two countries (and between the two newly formed governments), a more tense atmosphere was emerging. In Slovakia, the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (MKP) got into opposition and Robert Fico (leading the social-democratic government) became the prime minister while in Hungary Ferenc Gyurcsány's Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) remained in power. From the year 2006 conflicts started to escalate: ever since the extreme nationalist Slovakian Nationalist Party (SNS) has become member of the coalition government, the anti-Hungarian statements of its party leader Ján Slota increased tensions and nurtured intolerance against Hungarians among Slovaks. Among others, Slota claimed that a brutal propagation of the Hungarian language takes place in Slovakia, and a nationalist youth group burnt the Hungarian flag in order to protest against Hungarians. In August, the building of the Slovak embassy in Budapest was damaged, and in the same month a Hungarian university student, Malina Hedvig was beaten by unknown people in Nitra because she was speaking Hungarian on the street. On 10 October the meeting of Gyurcsány and Fico in the frame of the summit meeting of the Visegrad Group has been cancelled because the Hungarian party expressed his resentment that the Slovak prime minister does not set himself apart from the violent manifestations against Hungarians in Slovakia.<sup>37</sup> The examples of delicate issues could be expanded upon, but essentially the above shows the character of relations between the two states around the 2006 meeting, tensions which can be partially observed in the work of the JMC as well.

At the sixth meeting of the JMC the Committee did not adopt new recommendations, but newly confirmed and stressed the previously defined objectives highlighting the aim of strengthening the mutual trust between each other. Furthermore, a clear expectation of the Parties was that minorities could be useful citizens of their countries provided that all conditions would be given for the preservation of their identity and for the enforcement of their rights based on generally accepted norms, international legal practice and bilateral agreements.

#### *The seventh meeting of the JMC*

The meeting was organized in Budapest on 18 September 2007, where the Parties welcomed the results of the meeting of the prime ministers of Hungary and Slovakia in Bratislava in June 2007. The meeting positively influenced the further development of bilateral relations between the countries, and according to the seventh protocol<sup>38</sup> the accepted and signed package contributes to the deepening of bilateral relations, to better understanding and improvement of the situation of national minorities. The mentioned Agreement "Common Past, Common Future, in the mirror of common objectives" was signed by Ferenc Gyurcsány and Robert Fico<sup>39</sup>. Parties noticed that "national minorities living in the Slovak Republic and

37 *MTI*, 2006.

38 *Protocol on the seventh meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 18 September 2007.*

39 The Agreement was signed on the 15 November in Komárno, Slovakia. Slovak Government, 2008.



the Republic of Hungary form a natural connection between the two countries; as such, they contribute to the enrichment and strengthening of relations and cooperation between the two countries". Regarding the crucial role of education to preserve national minorities' ethnic and cultural identities, the cultivation of their native languages, and the knowledge of the majority language in Hungary and in Slovakia, the Parties pledged support for the use of high-quality educational materials for the education of national minorities, both in the context of language and content.<sup>40</sup>

In the protocol they agreed that in the upcoming years it would be expedient to increasingly rely on the development of political opportunities concerning minorities, and so they urge the utilization of resources of national, transnational and interregional EU programs for the sake of their achievement.

A considerable number of these objectives were formulated more precisely than at the previous meetings. Among the newly defined recommendations, there are mostly aims concerning the development of cultural tourism and interregional relations; the establishment and support of educational institutions; widening of access opportunities of television and radio programs for minorities; supporting minority journals and so on.

#### *The eighth meeting of the JMC*

The parties met on 10 June 2008 in Bratislava, in spite of the fact that Hungarian–Slovakian relations did not develop after the meeting of the prime ministers in 2007, moreover, hostilities between Hungarians and Slovaks increased. It was the case not only in Slovakia, but the Hungarian state also demonstrated its disagreement and rejection in connection with the issue how Slovakia dealt with the Hungarian minority. For instance, in October 2008 foreign minister Kinga Göncz summoned the ambassador of Slovakia in Hungary due to violation of language rights in Slovakia. The Slovak state has failed to meet its earlier commitment to include the Hungarian version of geographical names in Slovak textbooks used by Hungarian schools. There were also complaints that Hungarian schools are not subsidized by EU funds in Slovakia.<sup>41</sup>

Returning to the 2008 meeting of the JMC, in the protocol of the meeting<sup>42</sup> the Parties declared that in case of agreement on open questions it is important for both Parties to retain the reached level of minority protection, and to make an effort to protect the positive gains for minorities' lives in both countries.

Parties did not especially deal with sensitive topics on the meeting, which is also due to the mentioned conflicts and tensions between them, however they referred to a number of previous recommendations, as it was in the case of other

40 Protocol on the seventh meeting, section 2.

41 *Perspective*, 2008.

42 Protocol on the eighth meeting of the Hungarian–Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Bratislava, 10 June 2008.



protocols as well. For the Slovak and Hungarian Party only a small number of new objectives were drawn up in connection with securing financial help for the reconstruction of buildings owned by the Hungarian or Slovak minority in both countries.

### *The ninth meeting of the JMC*

On 17 July 2009, the two Parties organized the ninth Committee meeting in Budapest. In the first section of the protocol<sup>43</sup> the Parties pronounced the importance of condemning all forms of ethnic conflict of interest and chauvinism and the public manifestations of extremist movements and associations directed in many cases against minorities.

Most importantly, the protocol notes that the recently adopted modification of the Act on the State Language in Slovakia was negotiated between the Parties. The Slovak Party reassured the Hungarian Party that with the application of the mentioned Act constitutional and legal linguistic rights of minorities would not be violated in any form. The Hungarian Party stated that it saw the Act as a legal restriction, therefore it retained its objections and indicated there is a need for further consultation in connection with it.

Regarding the linguistic rights of minorities living in Slovakia, several international legal obligations should be applied: Slovakia has ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The Slovak state is also bound by EU regulation, and by other international political commitments adopted as legal ones in its bilateral relations with Hungary by the 1995 Basic Treaty.<sup>44</sup>

The preamble of the Act<sup>45</sup> declares that the Slovak language is the most important characteristic representing the uniqueness of the Slovak nation, the most valuable asset of its cultural heritage and the expression of its sovereignty, also the basic tool for communication of its citizens guaranteeing their freedom, equal rights and equal dignity on the territory of Slovakia.<sup>46</sup> It is observable, however, that several regulations of the Act are contrary to the EU law infringing the prohibition of direct or indirect discrimination (incorporated into the Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin) because these cannot always be legally justified with an objective aim.<sup>47</sup>

The Act regulates the language use in almost all areas of everyday life declaring that citizens can officially use only the Slovak language.<sup>48</sup> In case the proportion of minorities on a given settlement reaches 20% or the use of foreign language is

43 Protocol on the ninth meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 17 July 2009.

44 Kardos, Majtényi and Vizi, 2009.

45 Act 357/2009 of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the National Language of the Slovak Republic.

46 Act 357/2009, Preamble

47 Kardos, Majtényi and Vizi, 2009.

48 Act 357/2009, paragraph 2 and 3.





justified on account of international relations, the minority language can be used as well. In public offices employees are obliged to know and use the Slovak language<sup>49</sup>. According to these rules, it can happen that on those settlements where the number of Hungarian minority does not reach the defined 20% the Hungarian employee and the Hungarian customer are obliged to talk in Slovak, although the use of their mother tongue would be much easier and more natural.<sup>50</sup> In elementary and secondary schools the education of Slovak language is obligatory, and all school documentation has to be led in Slovak or in minority schools in both languages.<sup>51</sup> The mentioned regulations cause direct discrimination because they treat people belonging to national or ethnic minorities less favorably than people belonging to the Slovak majority. In emergencies, for instance, because of inefficient regulation the lack of communication can cost even a life (in hospitals, etc.).<sup>52</sup>

In spite of tensions caused by the Language law as well, the Parties adopted several new recommendation and strengthened numerous previously established aims.

#### *The tenth meeting of the JMC*

On the meeting organized in Bratislava on 2 February 2011, one of the main aims of the Parties, according to the second section of the protocol<sup>53</sup>, was to discuss the issues causing disagreements in the recent past.

In connection with the Slovak Language Act the Hungarian Party maintained its opinion that there was a need to take further steps, in conformity with recommendations of international organizations, in order to create a balance between the protection of the state language and the protection of language use of national minorities. It was indicated in the protocol that the Parties have a difference of opinion on the issue, however they mutually appointed that the dialogue in the Joint Committee helps to decrease tensions of debates and helps to avoid the sharpening of disagreements.

Considering the large number of previously accepted recommendations, the Parties decided to cancel those which have been achieved and where the continuous accomplishment is carried out properly. One of the new objectives undertaken by the Slovak Party is to try to secure the electability of Hungarian textbooks and teaching materials, so that for schools more alternative textbooks would be available, and the teachers could teach from textbooks written by Hungarian professionals living in Slovakia instead of translated works. This commitment can be evaluated as an important step forward concerning the Slovak Party, however, the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia criticized the initiative's

49 Act 357/2009, paragraph 3.

50 Jogi Fórum, 2009.

51 Act 357/2009, paragraph 4.

52 Kardos, Majtényi and Vizi, 2009.

53 Protocol on the tenth meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Bratislava, 2 February 2011.



scope regarding history textbooks. In most cases, students have to study from books written in Hungarian, but being exact translations of Slovak history textbooks dealing with the history of Slovaks and evaluating historical events only from Slovak perspective.<sup>54</sup>

#### *The eleventh meeting of the JMC*

As a result of the Slovakian parliamentary elections in March 2012 the extremist and anti-Hungarian Slovak National Party (SNS) was not able to reach the threshold to get into the Slovak Parliament; the Social-democratic Party (Smer) led by Robert Fico received absolute majority with the aim to continue and strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation with Hungary. Relations started to improve substantially between the Viktor Orbán-led Hungary and Slovakia, and the two foreign ministers in the year 2012 highlighted that relations between the two countries are better than it might appear, also emphasizing the importance of dialogue, as far as the two countries have stronger common interests than disputes.<sup>55</sup>

In this spirit the JMC held its subsequent meeting in Budapest on 7 November 2012. Parties agreed in the protocol<sup>56</sup> that the improvement of Hungarian–Slovak relations positively affects the life of the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia and of the Slovak minority living in Hungary.

The Slovak Party found that the two modifications of the State language law and the Law on the language use of national minorities is a positive step towards creating a balance between the protection of national language and protection of the language use of national minorities. The Hungarian Party, however, continues to maintain its opinion that there is a need to take further steps, in conformity with the recommendations of international bodies, in order to reach the mentioned balance.

The Slovak Party noted the new Hungarian Act on the parliamentary elections<sup>57</sup> and expects that in case a Slovak national representative will not be elected, the Slovak national parliamentary spokesperson would possess more expansive range of mandates. The Act ensures that the spokesperson representing any national group in parliament shall be a member of the national group he or she is representing<sup>58</sup>.

#### *The thirteenth meeting of the JMC*

The last meeting, at the time of the preparation of this paper, was held by the Parties in Budapest on 3 November 2016 after the Slovakian parliamentary election in March 2016 with the renewed victory of Robert Fico continued to improve

54 Radi, 2017.

55 *Hungarian Government*, 2012.

56 Protocol on the eleventh meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 7 November 2012.

57 Act 203/2011 on the election of parliamentary representatives.

58 Act 203/2011, para. 18.



relations with Hungary led by the third Orbán government. In October 2017, at the ceremony organized on the occasion of starting the construction of the new Danube bridge between Komárno and Komárom, Fico even stated that Hungarian–Slovakian relations were never as good as nowadays. The construction of the bridge can also be a symbol that both Parties take the improvement of relations seriously.<sup>59</sup>

On the meeting of the year, in 2016, representatives of Hungary and Slovakia supported the strategic alliance materialized through their bilateral relations and their close cooperation in the frame of the Visegrad Group, positively influencing the strengthening of the protection of national minorities and the constructive development of legal implementation for persons belonging to that group.

Parties noted the new Hungarian regulation concerning the electoral law<sup>60</sup>, which has created the conditions for the Slovak minority living in Hungary to gain the possibility of representation in the Hungarian Parliament.

The Hungarian Party, following the conclusion of negotiations, urges on taking the adequate political decision in the case of double citizenship. The 2010 modification of the Slovakian Act on citizenship<sup>61</sup> declares that a person who acquires the citizenship of another state automatically loses his or her Slovak citizenship on the day when he/she voluntarily, with a legal statement based on his free will, acquires the citizenship of another state<sup>62</sup>. The person losing his/her citizenship is required to announce this fact to the district office without delay.<sup>63</sup> In case of violating the Act and not announcing the acquisition of another citizenship to the proper district office, a person can be fined up to EUR 3319<sup>64</sup>.

The mentioned modification of the Act evoked strong criticism on the side of minority representatives living in Slovakia, mainly on the side of the Hungarian minority. As regards the legal concerns, the inconsistency of the Act with domestic regulation was highlighted, since the Slovak Constitution declares that no one can be deprived of the citizenship of the Slovak Republic against his/her will.<sup>65</sup> Acquiring the citizenship of another country does not mean that the Slovak citizen wants to give up his/her Slovak citizenship and so the loss of citizenship happens against his/her will, being contradictory with the mentioned article of the Slovak Constitution.

As regards the recommendations of the meeting, new objectives were accepted on the areas of supporting the development and preservation of common cultural heritage, cultural tourism and common organization of several events.

59 *Mandiner*, 2017.

60 Act 36/2013 on the electoral procedure.

61 Act 40/1993 of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the citizenship of the Slovak Republic.

62 Act 40/1993, para. 9 (16).

63 Act 40/1993, paragraph 9 (19).

64 Act 40/1993, paragraph 9b (1).

65 Constitution of the Slovak Republic, 1992.



## **EVALUATION OF THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE WORK OF THE JMC BY THE PRESENT HUNGARIAN AND SLOVAK CO-CHAIRMEN**

As mentioned in the first section of the paper, the operation and meetings of the JMC are led by the Slovak and Hungarian co-chairmen delegated by the governments, being responsible for the process of consultation and for the organization and leadership of Committee meetings. From April 2015, the Hungarian co-chairman of the JMC is Mr András Ferenc Kalmár, appointed as the Ministerial Commissioner Responsible for the Development of Neighborhood Policy of Hungary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary. The Slovak co-chairman, from the year 2003, is Mr Miroslav Mojžita, currently holding the office of Consul General of Slovakia in Uzhhorod. The opinion of both chairs were asked in connection with the past and present operation as well as future developments of the Committee's work, and in this section of the paper their views will be briefly presented.

The Hungarian co-chairman, Mr András Ferenc Kalmár sees it as good practice that the Hungarian government makes a regulation based on the protocols of Committee meetings, following which the regulations are transposed into the internal law of Hungary requiring accomplishment. Evaluating the monitoring mechanism of the work of the JMC, the Hungarian co-chairman mentioned that the Parties did not agree on a control mechanism overseeing the operation of the JMC and the realization of objectives set by protocols. It is due to the fact that signed protocols of JMC meetings are transposed into the domestic law of Hungary and Slovakia by legally binding government decisions, which have to be respected by the Parties. Therefore, there is no need for a special monitoring body or mechanism in order to fulfill the given aims. It has to be added, though, that in case the set objectives are not realized, in addition to the absence of a monitoring mechanism, the absence of sanctions is also observable, essentially allowing both states to evade the duty of accomplishment.

According to Mr Kalmár the work of the JMC could be developed in the future, for instance, in case both Parties would comply with the objectives of the 1995 Basic Treaty concerning the operation of the JMC. The Committee could also secure a place for debates and discussions on fundamental questions, such as collective rights of minorities.

In his opinion Mr Kalmár explained that besides the work of the JMC there would be other opportunities for cooperation among the two states as well, for instance the common action in favor of national minorities in multilateral organizations, or confidence-building actions in the Visegrad Group. However, it also has to be mentioned that thus far the issue of national minorities has not been on the agenda of the V4; the topic has not even been negotiated, and so the probability for cooperation in minority issues seems to be low in the near future as well.



Regarding the operation of the JMC, the Slovak co-chairman, Mr Miroslav Mojžita has highlighted that the work of the Committee is an important part of the implementation of the Slovak–Hungarian Basic Treaty, more precisely of its Article 15 contributing to the harmonization of bilateral relations between the two countries. Mr Mojžita did not clarify the way representatives of the Hungarian minority were chosen to participate in the work of the Slovak side of the joint committee; however it would be an important and relevant issue to examine it in a future research.

According to the Slovak co-chairman, the practice of drafting recommendations has been proved successful for both governments and should be continued in the future when solving minority questions. During the period between two Committee meetings, the Slovak side strives to fulfill the planned objectives and it may call the attention of the relevant institutions to accomplish these objectives until the date of the forthcoming Committee meeting. He has also highlighted that the legitimacy of the 1995 Treaty is permanent, and so Parties have to follow its objectives in the future as well. Furthermore, by joining the EU, bilateral relations between the two countries have deepened with the possibility of closer cooperation including the minority issues as well. According to Mr Mojžita, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century new forms and interactions have appeared and this is the reason why it is important to regularly evaluate the implementation of the mentioned part of the Basic Treaty eliminating possible misunderstandings as well. These are the reasons why the work of the Joint Commission is unique and important.

Based on the short remarks of the co-chairs the Committee's work is evaluated as an important tool of cooperation between the two countries, and its operation has deepened the understanding and respect between the Parties and towards national minorities. Both co-chairmen confirmed that the work of the JMC has to be continued in the future, as it is an important channel of cooperation. Critical remarks were not formulated, or formulated only cautiously, and only a few concrete recommendations were made for the future. However, it is also due to the fact they supposedly refrained from jeopardizing the established good relations among each other that could set back the success of joint work in the future.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the paper was to give a closer look at the operation of the Hungarian–Slovakian Joint Minority Committee based primarily on the text of its protocols. It is noticeable that the cooperation in the framework of the Committee has broadened throughout the years, and in spite of the initial uncertainties, the aims of the Parties shifted towards concrete objectives of realization.

On a critical note, however, it must be said that the operation and workflow of the Committee cannot be easily followed since only a portion of the protocols is available for the wider public. There are significant difficulties around access to the



Parties' pre-meeting recommendations, even on the governmental level. Furthermore, a considerable number of recommendations recurs in several consecutive protocols indicating that the realization of these objectives did not happen. It was also a general characteristic that governmental bodies responsible for the coordination of the work of the JMC have been altered several times throughout the years. The composition of committees on both sides is seen as an unclear and non-defined area hampering the transparency of the Committee.<sup>66</sup> As mentioned, neither the Basic Treaty, nor the protocols established the composition of participants of Committee meetings, including the representatives of minorities. In order to develop the operation of the Committee, the raised concerns should be examined to a larger extent by both sides, according to the writer of the present study.

On the other hand, it has to be highlighted as well that thanks to Committee negotiations, important objectives have been achieved throughout the years on both sides, and in case of aims and issues not accomplished or debated, further discussions were conducted, bringing both Parties closer to finding a solution. As it was mentioned in the protocols, the realization of the projects requires, in most cases, several years and their implementation happens continuously.

The work of the Hungarian–Slovakian JMC follows in its operation the step-by-step approach and supports the protection of national minorities by soft policy measures and with the aim of cooperation. This is the reason their possibilities are limited to defined issues and reaching agreement on several topics often requires years or decades. Even in case the Parties do not agree, the Committee is a crucially important forum and good opportunity for the institutionalized dialogue between the two countries where problems, ideas and solutions can be put on the table.

66 Tóth, 2011.



## REFERENCES

### *Legal documents*

- Szerződés a Magyar Köztársaság és a Szlovák Köztársaság között a jószomszédi kapcsolatokról és a baráti együttműködésről; „Alapszerződés”, 1995. március 19. (Treaty between the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Slovakia on the good neighborhood relations and friendly cooperation; “Basic Treaty”, 19 March 1995)
- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Council of Europe, February 1995, H (95) 10
- Jegyzőkönyv a Magyar–szlovák Kisebbségi Vegyes Bizottság alakuló üléséről, Budapest, 1999. február 8. (Protocol on the constitutional meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 8 February 1999).
- Jegyzőkönyv a Magyar–szlovák Kisebbségi Vegyes Bizottság II. üléséről, Budapest, 1999. szeptember 29. (Protocol on the second meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 29 September 1999).
- Jegyzőkönyv a Magyar–Szlovák Kisebbségi Vegyes Bizottság III. üléséről, Budapest, 2001. március 30. (Protocol on the third meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 30 March 2001).
- Jegyzőkönyv a Magyar–Szlovák Kisebbségi Vegyes Bizottság IV. üléséről, Pozsony, 2003. június 5. (Protocol on the fourth meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Bratislava, 5 June 2003).
- Jegyzőkönyv a Magyar–Szlovák Kisebbségi Vegyes Bizottság V. üléséről, Budapest, 2005. november 15. (Protocol on the fifth meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 15 November 2005).
- Jegyzőkönyv a Magyar–Szlovák Kisebbségi Vegyes Bizottság VI. üléséről, Pozsony, 2006. szeptember 22. (Protocol on the sixth meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Bratislava, 22 September 2006).
- Jegyzőkönyv a Magyar–Szlovák Kisebbségi Vegyes Bizottság VII. üléséről, Pozsony, 2007. szeptember 18. (Protocol on the seventh meeting of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 18 September 2007).
- Jegyzőkönyv a Magyar–Szlovák Kisebbségi Vegyes Bizottság XIII. üléséről, Pozsony, 2008. június 10. (Protocol on the eighth meeting of the Hungarian–Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Bratislava, 10 June 2008).
- Jegyzőkönyv a Magyar–Szlovák Kisebbségi Vegyes Bizottság IX. üléséről, Budapest, 2009. július 17. (Protocol on the ninth meeting of the Hungarian–Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 17 July 2009).
- Jegyzőkönyv a Magyar–Szlovák Kisebbségi Vegyes Bizottság X. üléséről, Pozsony, 2011. február 2. (Protocol on the tenth meeting of the Hungarian–Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Bratislava, 2 February 2011).
- Jegyzőkönyv a Magyar–Szlovák Kisebbségi Vegyes Bizottság XI. üléséről, Budapest, 2012. november 7. (Protocol on the eleventh meeting of the Hungarian–Slovakian Joint Minority Committee, Budapest, 7 November 2012).
- A Szlovák Köztársaság Alkotmánya, 1992. szeptember 1. (Constitution of the Slovak Republic, 1 September 1992).
- Zákon č. 40/1993 Zákon Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky o štátnom občianstve Slovenskej republiky, 15.02.1993 (Act 40/1993 of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the citizenship of the Slovak Republic, 2 February 1993, its modification in force from 20 July 2015).
- Zákon č. 184/1999 Z. z. o používaní jazykov národnostných menšín (Act 184/1999 on the language use of national minorities), National Council of the Republic of Slovakia, 24 July 1999, in force from 1 October 2012.
2005. évi CXIV. törvény a kisebbségi önkormányzati képviselők választásáról, valamint a nemzeti és etnikai kisebbségekre vonatkozó egyes törvények módosításáról, 2005. október 17. (Act 114/2005 on the election of national minority self-government representatives and on the modification of certain acts concerning national and ethnic minorities, 17 October 2005).
- 44/2009. (III. 4.) Korm. rendelet a Magyar Köztársaság Kormánya és a Szlovák Köztársaság Kormánya között a nemzeti kisebbségek kölcsönös oktatási és kulturális támogatásáról szóló megállapodás kihirdetéséről (Regulation 44/2009 of the Hungarian Government on the publication of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and Republic of Slovakia on the mutual educational and cultural support of national minorities, 4 March 2009).



- 357/2009 Z. z. Zákon Národnej Rady Slovenskej Republiky o štátnom jazyku Slovenskej republiky, 09.09.2009. (357/2009 Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the National Language of the Slovak Republic, 3 September 2009).
2011. évi CCIII. törvény az országgyűlési képviselők választásáról, 2011. december 30. (Act 203/2011 on the election of parliamentary representatives, 30 December 2011, in force from 26 November 2014).
2013. évi XXXVI. törvény a választási eljárásról, 2013. április 18. (Act 36/2013 on the electoral procedure, 18 April 2013, in force from 1 July 2016).

## Secondary sources

- Bíró, Gáspár (1999) Bilateral Treaties between Hungary and Its Neighbors after 1989. In Romsics and Király (eds.) *Geopolitics in the Danube Region. Hungarian Reconciliation Efforts, 1848-1998*. CEU Press, Budapest, pp. 347-378.
- Brubaker, Rogers (1996) *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-46. [Online]. Available from: [https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2011/SOC788/um/BRUBAKER\\_Nationalism\\_reframed.pdf](https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2011/SOC788/um/BRUBAKER_Nationalism_reframed.pdf) [Accessed: 20 May 2018].
- Fiala-Butora, János (2012) A magyar nyelv jogi helyzete Szlovákiában. In Eplényi and Kántor (eds.) *Térvesztés és határtalanítás*. Lucidus, Budapest, pp. 144-171.
- Fiala-Butora, János (2013) Hungarians in Slovakia and the Evolution of Hungarian-Slovakian Bilateral Relations – Improvement or Stalemate? *European Yearbook of Minority Issues*, Volume 12, pp. 158-196.
- Gömörilap (2016) Szlovák törvények már magyarul is. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.gomorilap.sk/rimaszombat/szlovak-torvenyek-mar-magyarul-is/> [Accessed: 19 May 2018].
- Hungarian Government (2012) A magyar–szlovák kapcsolatok jobbakként tűnhetnek. [Online]. Available from: <http://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/kulugyminiszterium/hirek/a-magyar-szlovak-kapcsolatok-jobbak-mint-amilyenek-tunhetnek> [Accessed: 23 May 2018].
- Jeszenszky, Géza (1996) Hungary's Bilateral Treaties with the Neighbours and the Issue of Minorities. *Ethnos-Nation. Eine europäische Zeitschrift*, Jg. 4. Nr. 1-2., pp. 123-128.
- Jogi Fórum (2009) Mit is szabályoz pontosan a szlovák államnyelvtörvény? [Online]. Available from: <http://www.jogiforum.hu/hirek/21736> [Accessed: 20 April 2018].
- Kardos, Gábor, Majtényi, Balázs and Vizi, Balázs (2009) A szlovákiai államnyelv-törvény módosításának elemzése. MTA Kisebbségkutató Intézet. [Online]. Available from: <http://kisebbssegkutato.tk.mta.hu/uploads/files/archive/855.pdf> [Accessed: 20 May 2018].
- Kelemen, Csaba: Magyar–szlovák alapszerződés, 1995.03.13. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.grotius.hu/publ/displ.asp?id=FSGUIC> [Accessed: 11 September 2018].
- Mandiner (2017) Fico: Soha nem voltak olyan jók a szlovák-magyar kapcsolatok, mint most. [Online]. Available from: [http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20171017\\_fico\\_soha\\_nem\\_voltak\\_olyan\\_jok\\_a\\_szlovak\\_magyar\\_kapcsolatok\\_mint\\_most](http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20171017_fico_soha_nem_voltak_olyan_jok_a_szlovak_magyar_kapcsolatok_mint_most) [Accessed: 24 May 2018].
- MTI (2008) A magyar–szlovák konfliktus kronológiája 2006-tól (Chronology of Hungarian–Slovak conflict from the year 2006). [Online]. Available from: [http://www.bumm.sk/archivum/2008/12/05/24747\\_a-magyar-szlovak-konfliktus-kronologiaja-2006-tol](http://www.bumm.sk/archivum/2008/12/05/24747_a-magyar-szlovak-konfliktus-kronologiaja-2006-tol) [Accessed: 19 April 2018].
- Perspective (2008) Hungarian–Slovakian relations reach their nadir. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.cafe-babel.co.uk/society/article/perspective-hungarian-slovak-relations-reach-their-nadir.html> [Accessed: 23 May 2018].
- Radi, Anita (2017) A szlovák történelemkönyvek hibáiról. Felvidék ma. [Online]. Available from: <http://felvidek.ma/2017/10/a-szlovak-tortenelemkonyvek-hibairol/> [Accessed: 20 April 2018].
- Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.kerekasztal.org/> [Accessed: 17 April 2018].
- Sidó, Árpád, Fiala, János, Vincze, Dávid and Jarábik, Balázs (2003) A szlovák–magyar alapszerződés hatásvizsgálata (The impact assessment of the Hungarian-Slovakian Basic Treaty). [Online]. Available from: [http://www.kbdesign.sk/cla/projects/slovak\\_hungarian\\_treaty/cla\\_analysis/szlovak\\_magyar\\_roiditett.htm](http://www.kbdesign.sk/cla/projects/slovak_hungarian_treaty/cla_analysis/szlovak_magyar_roiditett.htm) [Accessed: 8 March 2018].
- Slovak Government (2008) Joint statement of The Prime Ministers of the Slovak Republic and of the Republic of Hungary, Mr. Robert Fico and Mr. Ferenc Gyurcsány. [Online]. Available from: [http://archiv.vlada.gov.sk/old.uv/12758/spolocne-vyhlasenie-predsedov-vlad-sr-a-mr-po-spolocnom-stretnuti-v-komarne-15-novembra-2008-\(v-anglickom-jazyku\)fedb.html?day=2011-09-01&art\\_datum\\_od=&art\\_datum\\_do="](http://archiv.vlada.gov.sk/old.uv/12758/spolocne-vyhlasenie-predsedov-vlad-sr-a-mr-po-spolocnom-stretnuti-v-komarne-15-novembra-2008-(v-anglickom-jazyku)fedb.html?day=2011-09-01&art_datum_od=&art_datum_do=) [Accessed: 19 May 2018].





- Szabó Mihály, Gizella (2006) A szlovák nyelvpolitika és a kisebbségek anyanyelv-használati lehetőségei és törekvései. *Romániai Magyar Jogtudományi Közöny*, Nr. 2. pp. 43-49.
- Szlovákiai Magyar Adatbank (Hungarian Databank of Slovakia). [Online]. Available from: <http://adatbank.sk/lexikon/demografiai-valtozasok/>. [Accessed: 19 May 2018].
- Tóth, Judit (2011) A kisebbségek kulturális jogai Magyarországon a nemzetközi vállalások tükrében. *Kisebbségkutatás*, Nr. 1, pp. 47-72.
- Törvénytár [Online]. Available from: <http://www.torvenytar.sk/> [Accessed: 19 May 2018].
- Vass, Ágnes (2013) A kisebbségi nyelvhasználat helyzete Szlovákiában. *LÉTÜNK*, special issue, pp. 72-91.
- Vass, Ágnes (2014) Szlovák–magyar kettős állampolgárok szlovák állampolgárság nélkül. *Magyar Kisebbség*, XVIII. (6970). pp. 129-151.