

ROMANIA

Hungarians

Activity: 1990-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- The Hungarians have organized rapidly and effectively since 1990 in various associations based on religion or culture, later melted under the aegis of the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (DUHR), who has assumed the task of political representation of the community. We therefore peg the start date of the movement at 1990. In the general elections the DUHR has won seats in every legislature since 1990 and they have sent representatives to two consecutive cabinets. The DUHR remains active in politics as of 2020. The claim for autonomy has always been part of DUHR's election manifestoes, with the exception of 2000 (Kiss and Szekely 2016). The grievances of the Hungarian minority are focused on several issues: limited local autonomy in the regions where they form the majority; the right to use their language in the public administration and tribunals; the right to have instruction at all levels of education in their language; and restitution of church property confiscated by the communist regime (Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Keesing; Marshall & Gurr 2003; Minahan 1996, 2002; MAR; UDMR). [start date: 1990; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (DUHR) is the primary representative of the Hungarian movement for self-determination in Romania. The organization has advocated cultural and territorial autonomy (DUHR 2022). Bochsler and Szöcsik (2013), Deets and Stroschein (2005), the Minorities at Risk Project and the Minority Rights Group International provide further evidence, with the latter mentioning "demands for territorial autonomy" as the primary claim of the Hungarians in Romania. As of 2003, the moderate leadership of the DUHR was challenged by different, more radical Hungarian groups. However, most of these groups also advocate autonomy rather than independence and since the DUHR remains the dominant representative of the Hungarian minority anyway, we code an autonomy claim throughout. [1990-2020: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

- Hewitt and Cheetham (2000: 248) suggest that Hungarians have called for the reunification of Transylvania with Hungary and, failing that, the restoration of an autonomous Hungarian region within Romania. Yet, we could not find corroborating evidence suggesting irredentist claims prior to 2000, the year Hewitt and Cheetham's encyclopedia was published.

- In the context of the 100th anniversary of the 1918 Treaty of Trianon, some groups suggested that the Treaty should be revised, which “arbitrarily” made Transylvania a part of Romania, and suggested that the territory is under “temporary occupation” (Pilhál 2019). Yet, such claims are typically made not by Hungarians in Romania, but in Hungary. Pilhál is part of a group of far right journalists supported by Viktor Orbán which has been described by others as cause for concern, and potentially a first step towards the growth of “Hungarian irredentism” (Hungarian Spectrum 2019).
- The President of Romania Klaus Iohannis made comments claiming that there are forces within the Romanian opposition party (PSD) vying to “give Transylvania to Hungarians” (due to the party’s support for increased autonomy granted to Hungarians). But this does not seem to correspond to a verifiable irredentist claim, and must be instead understood in the context of domestic ‘politics’ (Agerpes 2020; Barberá 2020).
- While there may be some support for irredentism internally among Hungarians in Transylvania, we could not find an organized movement operating in Romania. [no irredentist claims]

Claimed territory

- The Hungarians want more self-determination in the regions where they form the majority. This includes the counties of Harghite, Covasna, and many smaller communities in the counties of Mures, Satu Mare, Salaj, Cluj, Alba, and Bihor (see below). We used a 2011 census map from Wikipedia to identify all Hungarian-majority counties and code that territory using the Global Administrative Areas database.

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- We found no reports of separatist violence, hence a NVIOLSD classification. [NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- Most ethnic Hungarians of Romania live in areas that had belonged to Hungary before the 1920 Treaty of Trianon and are known as Transylvania today. Transylvania, part of the Kingdom of Hungary from the eleventh century on, became an autonomous state under the Ottoman suzerainty in 1571. After the Ottoman defeat in Vienna in 1683, the Habsburg Empire gradually incorporated Transylvania and in 1711 the territory became part of the Habsburg Monarchy with a special status. The formerly autonomous princes of Transylvania were replaced with Habsburg-installed governors. The special status of Transylvania ended in 1867, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire was established. Transylvania was included in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where it formed part of the Hungarian kingdom, which had considerable autonomy in the conduct of national defense, foreign affairs, and certain financial matters. Hungarian was declared the official language and a policy of Magyarization aimed at assimilating the ethnic minority groups of Transylvania (Minahan 2000; Minorities at Risk; Minority Rights Group International).
- After the First World War, Romania acquired the ethnically diverse territory of Transylvania and more than 1.5 million Hungarians suddenly became a minority within Romania. The Treaty of Trianon in 1920 finalized the incorporation despite efforts by the Szeklers and Magyars to establish their own Republic in Transylvania (Minahan 2000: 312). Although self-government was promised for the minorities, among which the Hungarians, no such concessions were implemented. Instead, the Romanian government neglected minorities, placed restrictions on

language and religious rights and applied a policy of Romanianization (Minahan 2003: 1813; Minority Rights Group International).

- During the Second World War, as an axis ally, fascist Hungary was allowed to annex northern Transylvania into Hungary once more. However, Romanian control was re-established after the war and the pre-1937 borders were re-instated in 1946 (Minahan 2000: 313; Minority Rights Group International).
- In the early years of communist rule, the Hungarians enjoyed some degree of territorial autonomy and cultural rights for a brief period. The Constitution of 1952 established the Magyar Autonomous Region (Deets and Stroschein 2005; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 298). However, its “powers of self-rule were only nominal” (Minority Rights Group International) and only one-third of Romania’s Hungarians lived within its boundaries. Nevertheless, there were some accommodative characteristics such as the permission to use the Hungarian language in administration and courts and the use of bilingual signs. The communist regime also made cultural concessions to its minority groups by providing a network of minority-language schools, publications and cultural organizations. The accommodative stance soon came to an end and the communist policy gradually moved towards assimilation. A 1960 administrative reform redrew the borders of the Magyar Autonomous Region, making the proportion of Hungarians decline (Culic 2006). The region was finally dissolved in 1968 (note: EPR codes an end to regional autonomy already in 1957) when a new administrative organization replaced regions with counties whose borders did not follow the settlements of any nationality. With Nicolae Ceaușescu taking power in 1965 the policy of Romanianization was reinforced. Ceausescu harshly cut all language and minority rights in Romania. At the same time, ethnic Romanians received preferential treatment in terms of employment and benefits (Horvath 2002: 19).

Concessions and restrictions

- A new constitution was approved by referendum in December 1991. The new constitution proclaimed that Romania was a “unitary and indivisible National State”; a formulation that was opposed by the Hungarian minority. The constitution (article 6) however also contained a broad provision that the state “guarantees the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, to the preservation, development, and expression of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity” (Horvath 2002: 32). According to the Minority Rights Group International, this included education in the mother tongue (although article 13 declares Romanian the only official language) and the guarantee for national minorities to be represented in the parliament. While the latter concession concerns access to central state power (which we do not code here), the right to education in the mother tongue and the extension of minority-language television and radio broadcasts, as implemented in the following years, constitutes a cultural rights concession in line with the codebook. [1991: cultural rights concession]
- In 1993, an agreement was signed between Hungarian minority leaders and the Romanian government, granting the right to have Hungarian street signs in towns with more than 30% Hungarians and allowing for the training of Hungarian-language teachers (Horvath 2002: 37; Minorities at Risk Project). [1993: cultural rights concession]
- In 1995, the law on education (Law 84/1995) was passed. It curtailed the use of Hungarian in the classroom (or at least cemented the dominant status of Romanian). The law omitted the right to instruction in the mother tongue at all levels of public education; the right to instruction in the mother tongue in vocational schools (a provision also allowed in the communist-era); and reinstatement of government financing of education in minority church schools. Overall, the law can be considered a restriction of minority-language education (USE Foundation). [1995: cultural rights restriction]
- In 1996, Hungary and Romania signed a treaty which committed Romania to improving language rights of its Hungarian population (Cunningham 2014: 221). Seemingly as a result of this, the restrictive law on education 84/1995 was amended by ordinance 36/1997 and approved by parliament with the passing of the Law 151/1999. The anti-minority provisions were removed and article 120 of the 1995 Language Law was revised to include provisions on both the education of national minorities and education in the mother tongue (USE Foundation). People belonging to

national minorities now had “the right to study and receive instruction in their mother tongue, at all levels and forms of education where there is an appropriate request” (Constantin 2004: 6). [1997: cultural rights concession]

- Public administration Law 215/2002 allows speakers of national minority languages to use their language in public administration in cities where at least twenty per cent of the local population declares the language their mother tongue (Constantin 2004; Deets and Stroschein 2005). The new law was also included in the 2003 amendment to the constitution of 1991. A new paragraph of article 120 provides a guarantee for minorities to use their native language when dealing with local administration and in judicial proceedings (Constantin 2004; Minority Rights Group International). [2002: cultural rights concession]

Regional autonomy

NA

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

NA

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Hungarians
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Hungarians
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	36002000

Power access

- We follow EPR. [1990-1995: powerless; 1996-2008: junior partner; 2009: powerless; 2010-2012: junior partner; 2013-2020: powerless]

Group size

- We follow EPR. [1990-2012: 0.066; 2013-2020: 0.061]

Regional concentration

- The Hungarians have a regional base in which they dominate, but the question is whether more than 50% of all Hungarians in Romania live there:
 - o Both MAR V and MAR I-IV code the Hungarians as “concentrated in one region”. According to MAR V less than 50% of the Hungarian population lives in the regional base (Transsylvania), while according to MAR I-IV between 50% and 75% live in the regional base.
 - o We consulted county level data from the 2011 census, which is the most up-to-date

census available. The problem is that while there is a concentration of Hungarians in central Romania, they make up significant minorities in northwestern parts of Romania too (especially in Satu Mare county, where the Romanians make up 35% of the local population). Nevertheless, if we combine the three districts with the highest share of Hungarians (in two of them the Hungarians form an absolute majority), we come very close to the threshold for territorial concentration.

- The Hungarians make up an absolute majority in two counties in central Romania: Harghita county (approx. 258,000 Hungarians, or 85% of local population) and in Covasna county (approx. 150,000, or 73% of the local population). Compared to the 1.228 million Hungarians across Romania, this suggests that 33% of the Hungarians resided in a county with a Hungarian absolute majority.
- Larger concentrations of Hungarians can also be found in the neighboring Mures (approx. 201,000, or 38% of local population). Combining the three counties, the Hungarians make up a majority of 57%, while 49.6% of all Hungarians live there.
- If we add another adjacent county, we drop below the absolute majority requirement. The adjacent county with the highest share of Hungarians is Cluj county (approx. 104,000 or 16% of local population); if this is added, the Hungarian share across counties falls to 41%.
- Even if we are under the threshold based on county level data, we code the Hungarians as concentrated. Given that it is so close (only 5,000 more Hungarians are needed to cross the threshold), it is very likely that if some adjacent town(s) is/are added, the threshold is met. [concentrated]

Kin

- EPR codes ethnic kin in various countries (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Ukraine). MAR mentions the Hungarians in Hungary as the largest (and only) kin group. [kin in neighboring country]

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