

# HUNGARIAN KIN-STATE POLITICS

## A BLESSING OR CURSE?

Hannah Erkelens



## Article D – Hungarian Constitution –

*“Bearing in mind that there is one single Hungarian nation that belongs together, Hungary shall bear responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living beyond its borders, and shall facilitate the survival and development of their communities; it shall support their efforts to preserve their Hungarian identity, the assertion of their individual and collective rights, the establishment of their community self-governments, and their prosperity in their native lands, and shall promote their cooperation with each other and with Hungary.”*

\*Cover picture is the geographical map of Transcarpathia, edited; un-edited retrieved on August 2020 from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Zakarpattia\\_province\\_location\\_map.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Zakarpattia_province_location_map.svg)

\*\*Article D is part of the Hungarian Constitution of 2011; retrieved from: [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Hungary\\_2011.pdf](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Hungary_2011.pdf)

# Hungarian Kin-State Politics in Ukraine

## A Blessing or Curse?

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## Preface

Five years ago, in 2015 to be exact, I visited Transcarpathia to do volunteering at a Roma children's camp. I remember that I was shocked to see the poor living circumstances of Hungarians in Ukraine. The differences of living conditions between Hungarians living in Hungary and Hungarians living in Ukraine were mainly caused by the Hungarian-Ukrainian border and therewith the European Union border between them. Some people I spoke to back then referred to the help they got from Hungary, and were happy that at least someone (Orbán) was taking care of them. So, by going back to the region I wanted to see by myself what effect the Hungarian kin-state politics really had on the region.

First of all, I would like to thank my parents who raised me with the Hungarian language and showed me Hungary and the surrounding countries since I was born.

In relation to my field research I thank the teachers of the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education, who helped me with such great hospitality, especially Natika Oláh. Much appreciation goes out to the students of the Hungarian College who wanted to talk with me, even in their free time. I want to thank Patrik Tátrai and Katalin Kolozsvári (Kovály) from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences who helped me to come up with research questions and arranged my stay in Berehove. And lastly, I would also like to thank my supervisor Bert Bomert for giving me the needed feedbacks throughout the whole writing process.

## Executive Summary

The history of Hungary is quite tumultuous; various foreign powers have ruled over the country for hundreds of years and geographical borders shifted continuously. Arguably because of this, over the years the Hungarian national identity became more and more important for Hungarian political elites. The need for a nationalistic approach raised dramatically when the Treaty of Trianon was signed in 1920, a consequence of fighting on the wrong side during the First World War. By signing this treaty, Hungary lost two-thirds of its land and a large part of its population to the neighbouring countries. One of the consequences was that some ethnic Hungarians were no longer living in Hungary, but in a neighbouring country: so-called kin-state politics were born. Hungary is a kin-state because it pursues policies directed at the members of a co-ethnic group (in this case Hungarians) living abroad, (often) in neighbouring countries. These trans-border communities are a result of shifting borders in the past. After the signing of the treaty, the various Hungarian governments tried everything to regain former land, even going so far as collaborating with Hitler, which in the end didn't work out successfully. When Hungary became part of the Soviet-dominated block, the Treaty of Trianon became a taboo. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Treaty of Trianon returned to the political agenda, especially under prime minister Orbán after he won the election in 2010; he is still in power.

This research focuses on the kin-state policies of the Hungarian government and the non-resident citizenship law. According to this law everyone who can prove that his/her ancestors were Hungarian and is able to speak the Hungarian language on a certain level can apply for a Hungarian passport. By having this Hungarian passport non-resident Hungarian citizens are also allowed to vote in the Hungarian elections. Critics claim that in the two most recent elections Orbán gained two-third majority because of the votes from Hungarians beyond the borders. This thesis addresses the Hungarian kin-minority living in Ukraine. They never moved, but the territory they lived in 'moved' to another place. The goal of this thesis is not only to focus on the benefits of the Hungarian kin-state politics for prime minister Orbán, but also on the day-to-day benefits and downsides for Hungarians beyond the borders, in this case in Ukraine, in particular in the region of Transcarpathia. Therefore, my main question of this thesis is thus as follows:

*How does the current government of Hungary shape the Hungarian identity in Transcarpathia and what effects do Hungarian kin-state politics have for people living in Transcarpathia?*

The research forming the foundation of this thesis is guided by a particular understanding of the concept of national identity and kin-state politics. In short, kin-state politics pursue policies directed at members of a co-ethnic (Hungarian) group. Ethnic groups living in the neighbouring countries remain important to the mother state in a cultural, social, economic

sense or even in numbers. Over the years, Hungarian kin-state politics varied in intensity and money. Between 2002 and 2010 the more left-wing Hungarian government tried to build a more independent relationship with the Hungarians beyond the borders. However, when in 2010 Fidesz won the elections and Orbán became the new prime minister, kin-state politics shifted immensely. In the first year of the new government a new non-residential citizenship law was implemented so that Hungarians beyond the border could request a Hungarian passport and based on this were able to vote in Hungary as well. This has had immense consequences for the elections in Hungary itself, because the number of eligible voters increased massively. Instead of continuing the policy of creating independent Hungarian communities abroad, the new government policies were directed at once more creating a dependency. The constitution of Hungary states that Hungary shall bear responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living beyond its borders, and shall facilitate the survival and development of their communities. Part of the kin-state politics is the 'survival' of the Hungarian community. Shaping Hungarian identity is used for this survival. National identity needs symbols as language, places, and flags. In Berehove (Ukraine), many Hungarian symbols are visible. Hungarian schools and churches display the Hungarian flag, and in the streets the Hungarian language can be heard and seen. Although the official time zone in Berehove is the Ukrainian one, most local people use the Hungarian time zone. Most people spoken to referred to themselves as Transcarpathian or Hungarian/Ukrainian Transcarpathian, and not just Hungarian or Ukrainian. This shows that people can have and be part of more than one identity. The notion of identity in Transcarpathia is a combination of birth place and a chosen identity. Identity can be shaped; many Ukrainian students visit Hungarian schools where they are raised and educated with a focus on the Hungarian identity, especially in kindergarten and primary schools. This obviously might change their feelings of belonging to a particular identity as well.

I obtained most of my research data at the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education in Berehove where quite a lot of Ukrainians study. Ukrainians study at this Hungarian College because the college is for free (funded by the Hungarian government), while Ukrainian colleges are rather expensive. The Hungarian government promotes Hungarian schools in the region, by funding the Rákóczi Association, that strongly promotes Hungarian schools by handing out presents, funding, and scholarships. The goal of stopping the decline of the number of students in Hungarian schools has already been achieved. The main reason that Ukrainians study at the Hungarian College is not the gifts from the Rákóczi Association nor the free higher education, but the possibility of learning the Hungarian language. Doing so, these students can apply for a Hungarian passport, because of the non-resident citizenship law, which is an easy entry to Hungary and the European Union.

It can be concluded that people living in Berehove are benefiting from the help of the Hungarian government. Even if Hungary is only helping the region for their own reason: to

win the elections by providing Hungarian citizenships and voting rights, and to attract more workers to Hungary. The people in the Ukrainian region also benefit from it: buildings are renovated, Hungarian education is for free, and in emergency situations, like the recent Corona crisis, Hungary helps out. People with a Hungarian passport can easily travel back and forth and work in the European Union, without having to go back every three months. A negative consequence of providing Hungarian passports is that more people will migrate to Hungary or other countries within the European Union. The Hungarian support is also creating a kind of dependency, which is not a good thing. Luckily the influence of Hungary doesn't lead to tensions between the various ethnicities in Berehove. It does, however, result in tensions on a higher political level. Ukraine obviously doesn't want any interference of any country inside their territory. Nevertheless, because the financial aid is beneficial for one of Ukraine's poorest regions, the country is tolerating the financial support coming from Hungary.

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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

EU	European Union
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
Fidesz	<i>Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége</i> ; Federation of Young Democrats
HVIM	<i>Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom</i> ; 64 Counties Youth Movement
Jobbik	<i>Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom</i> ; Movement for a Better Hungary
MDF	<i>Magyar Demokrata Fórum</i> ; Hungarian Democratic Forum
MSZP	<i>Magyar Szocialista Párt</i> ; Hungarian Socialist Part
MVSZ	<i>Magyarok Világszövetsége</i> ; World Federation of Hungarians
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SBU	Security Service of Ukraine
SZDSZ	<i>Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége</i> ; Alliance of Free Democrats
Visegrád (group)	Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

This thesis focuses on the Hungarian kin-state influence in Transcarpathia, Ukraine. Hungary is a kin-state because it conducts policies directed at the members of ethnic Hungarian communities living abroad, mainly in neighbouring countries. Trans-border ethnic communities in neighbouring countries have come into existence because of shifting borders in the past. The main reason for the shifting of borders in this specific case is the signing of the Treaty of Trianon (1920), which resulted in a two-third decrease of Hungarian territory. As a consequence, a great many people suddenly became citizens of another country – without migrating. These groups of people outside the Hungarian borders are also referred to as trans-border ethnic communities (Erőss, Kovály, Tátrai, 2017). During the course of the history of the Hungarian state, the various Hungarian governments have always had some focus on the ethnic Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries. Over the last ten years Hungary has shown a renewed focus on kin-state policies.

Kin-state policies are a very complex phenomenon, since they raise questions about issues as identity, membership, belonging and the boundaries between the kin-state and kin-communities. Policies might lead to friction with neighbouring countries. National identity is an important element in creating a sense of belonging, and in Hungarian kin-state policies. Kin-state policies are becoming more important and therefore it is useful to elaborate upon the concept of (national) identity more specifically, focused on Hungary. Various theories on kin-states will be discussed and the Hungarian kin-state policies over the last two hundred years will be analysed in order to come to a better understanding of contemporary kin-state policies. In other words, the central goal of this thesis is to provide a better insight in Hungarian kin-state policies and politics and the effect it has in Transcarpathia, its benefits and downsides for the people living in Transcarpathia.

### Research Questions

The main question, guiding the research for this thesis, is:

*How does the current government of Hungary shape the Hungarian identity in Transcarpathia and what effects do Hungarian kin-state politics have for people living in Transcarpathia?*

The main research question shows two focal points: Hungarian (national) identity and Hungarian kin-state politics. Although these notions will return throughout this thesis, they will initially be addressed separately in two chapters. The geographical focus is on the west-Ukrainian region of Transcarpathia (see frontpage picture and Map 3).

Kin-state policies are likely to focus more on the Hungarian minority living in Transcarpathia, but recent developments show that the Hungarian influence in the region might be beneficial for local non-Hungarians as well. The main point of attention will be on the effect

Hungarian kin-state policies have on *all* people living in the region. These effects can be beneficial, but might be negative as well.

In order to answer the main research question, several sub-questions and various related topics have to be addressed as well.

*What actually is the Hungarian national identity?*

To start with, it is important to analyse the Hungarian (national) identity because national identity is an important, defining part of Hungarian kin-state politics. In order to understand the Hungarian kin-state politics, it is therefore necessary to understand the Hungarian national identity. By analysing the Hungarian identity throughout history, we might be able to see how it has developed and what the dominant narratives are. In Chapter 2 the various theories and arguments concerning the notion of (national) identity will be discussed, resulting in a description of the concepts that have been used in the analysis of national identity policies and influences in Transcarpathia.

*What exactly are the Hungarian kin-state policies and their aims?*

Kin-state politics and policies are a relative new notion and phenomenon. In Chapter 3 the concept of kin-state politics will be discussed, so as to create a better understanding. In this chapter the kin-state politics and policies throughout history will be analysed as well. Kin-state policies are formulated and initiated by those politicians that are in power at a particular moment; this means obviously that policies might differ from one government to another, depending on the political parties ruling the country. The chapter ends with an analysis of the kin-state policies of the current government. Since these policies are directly relevant for the field research in Transcarpathia, it is vitally important to know what these policies are and what effect they may have in the region of Transcarpathia.

*To what extent does the Hungarian government try to shape Hungarian identity in Transcarpathia through its kin-state policies?*

The third sub-question is in a sense a combination of the two previous sub-questions, but with a geographical focus on Transcarpathia. Does the (present) Hungarian government want to and/or try to shape Hungarian national identity in Transcarpathia? To what extent is the Hungarian national identity intertwined in the Hungarian kin-state policies? This will be analysed through collected data in the form of interviews and observations in the region. In other words, the information and insights as collected in the previous chapters will be narrowed down by focusing on one region only.

*Is there a clear visible influence of Hungarian kin-state politics in Transcarpathia?*

Just like the previous sub-question, this one will be answered in Chapter 4 as well. During my field research in Berehove, Transcarpathia, I tried to find out whether or not there were any clear signs that could be related to the kin-state policies of the current Hungarian

government. By describing what I saw, in the form of vignettes and some pictures, I will discuss if this can be considered to be an effect of the Hungarian kin-state policies. In the process, the impact it has on the non-Hungarians in the region will be addressed as well.

*What are the benefits and/or downsides of the Hungarian kin-state politics for the Transcarpathian population?*

This final sub-question tries to find an answer regarding the consequences of the Hungarian kin-state politics in Transcarpathia. In order to make a proper analysis, the interviews that have been conducted will be used as well as the observations. Only few researchers have addressed whether the Hungarian influence might be beneficial for non-Hungarians as well. Therefore, this thesis also seeks to address this particular question.

## **Relevance of Thesis**

To illustrate the purpose and value of this research, both its social and scientific relevance will be explained.

### **Social Relevance**

Hungarian prime minister Orbán's interest in Transcarpathia and other pre-Trianon regions is part of his nationalist populist politics. In 2010 the Hungarian government introduced non-resident citizenship for ethnic Hungarians living outside the country. The government referred to this new policy as 'national reunification beyond the borders', associated with the notion of a de-territorialized nation. The following year the ethnic Hungarians got the right to vote in Hungary as well (Pogonyi, 2017). It is important to note that other countries, for instance Poland and Slovakia, have shown an increased interest in kin-state politics as well (Smith & Udrea, 2019), although my research will only pay attention to the role of Hungary in the region.

Political influence from a country in another country can lead to political friction. Concerns have arisen regarding the consequences for the relationship with Ukraine. Nowadays, Ukraine has not only to worry about the eastern part of the state but western Ukraine is also a cause for worries (Higgins, 2018). An illustration is the appointment of the Hungarian Ministerial Commissioner for the Development of Transcarpathia – a position that already existed, but the title of this official caused additional friction with(in) the Ukrainian government, since Transcarpathia is not Hungarian territory. Hungary could of course cool down the tension by changing the title of the commissioner, so as to avoid any suggestion that Hungary would claim Ukrainian territory (Somer, 2018). Somer (2018) argues that Orbán's main motivation is to prove himself to Putin, especially also witnessed by Orbán blocking a joint Ukrainian-NATO commission in 2018 (Somer, 2018). It shows that the current relationship between Hungary and Ukraine is not at its best.

The influence of Hungarian politics is felt at the national and international level, and in particular the (Hungarian) people living in Transcarpathia are confronted with it as well. One

can argue that the Hungarian minority finds the influence of Orbán to be beneficial to them. Hungarians do receive grants for studying in Hungary and they can also get Hungarian citizenship, even though Ukraine does not allow dual citizenship (Waterbury, 2014). Over a period of two years about \$60 million of Hungarian funds has been allocated to various projects in Transcarpathia, presented as an aid package in connection with the difficult situation in Ukraine, economically as well as socially. The Ukrainian population in Transcarpathia can apply for a free Hungarian language course, which might give them more job opportunities in Hungary. In some cases, infrastructure projects have been financed by Hungarian funds (Hromadske, 2018).

The funding of aid by Hungary may sound promising for the people in Transcarpathia, especially since Transcarpathia is one of the poorest regions of Ukraine (Jordan, 2013). Eighty percent of the region is taken up by the Carpathian Mountains, while the rest of it is lowland, located on the Hungarian border. Transcarpathia is an economic periphery, with the main income from border activities and a dominant agriculture industry. Because Transcarpathia is an economic periphery, migration in various forms has always been an issue in the region. Almost all Ukrainians who migrate to Hungary, up to 90 percent, originate from Transcarpathia (Caglar, 2013). However, Caglar (2013) notes that given a lack of real integration policies for migrants arriving in Hungary and the subsequent unwelcoming social context for them, it will result in a decreasing number of migrants from Ukraine to Hungary. Even ethnic Hungarians from neighbouring countries are seen as foreigners who come to work for lower wages in Hungary (Caglar, 2013).

Given the current economic situation in Transcarpathia, financial aid from Hungary to the region might not be seen as negative, but rather as positive. Nevertheless, it is still another state interfering in domestic affairs. What does this mean for Ukraine, and specifically, for Transcarpathia, in the short as well as the long run? According to Higgins (2018), there is increased concern that Hungarian kin-state policies could eventually result into more tensions in a country already plagued by tensions (Higgins, 2018). This argument underlines the societal relevance of this research, because the kin-state policies of the Hungarian government may be a cause of greater tensions in the region, in a country that is not very stable at the moment.

## Scientific Relevance

More literature on kin-state politics in Central and Eastern Europe has been published quite recently, especially in response to the more nationalist politics of prime minister Orbán (Eröss, Tátrai & Kovály, 2016; Waterbury, 2014; Pogonyi, 2017). Research has been conducted regarding other pre-Trianon territories as well, like Northern Serbia, Slovakia, and Croatia – countries and regions where the influence of Orbán is visible too (Waterbury, 2008). Most literature focuses on kin-citizenship, on the Hungarian minority, their feeling of belonging, and their identity (Veres, 2012; Baba, 2015).

Previous research has been done on the effects of the Ukrainian crisis in Transcarpathia, as seen from a Hungarian perspective. The main argument is that the growing migration of Hungarians is not only a consequence of the crisis in Ukraine, but also because of the politics of Orbán, giving Hungarians a passport (Erőss et al., 2016). Another research publication of Erőss, Kovály & Tátrai (2017) deals with kin-state politics and the growing Hungarian activities in Transcarpathia. The argument in this publication is that the crisis in Eastern Ukraine has led to a major geopolitical powershift. This has given the so-called Visegrád countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) more opportunities to intensify their presence and influence in Western Ukraine. The countries are mainly looking for human resources, given the lack of work forces at home. The conclusion is that the Hungarian kin-state politics and the introduction of dual citizenship have contributed to a smaller number of Hungarians living in the region. However, chances are that these migrants will not settle and work in Hungary, but rather prefer to move to Western Europe (Erőss, Kovály & Tátrai, 2017).

Migration is an important issue for Hungary, since the country has a low birth rate and many (young) people move to Western Europe, looking for better opportunities. The Hungarian government tries to stop the migration of Hungarians from trans-border areas to keep the Hungarian community together. The main goal, however, is to bring the ethnic Hungarians to Hungary, because of local labour shortages (Doros, 2016). This shows that Hungary's own national interests are more important than the interests of the kin-minorities (Pogonyi, 2017)

The research of the various scholars mainly focuses on the issue of migration and the perceived assets of having a Hungarian passport. This thesis will add additional information, knowledge and insight, not by focusing on externally oriented issues like migration and passports, but rather on the internal effects in the region. To what extent is a Hungarian influence visible and noticeable? What are the exact benefits for Hungarians living in Transcarpathia? Are Hungarian schools, because of improved future perspectives, more popular than the Ukrainian ones; how popular are Hungarian language schools in the region? I am also interested in the perceptions of the non-Hungarian population of Transcarpathia and the extent to which Hungarian kin-state policies are beneficial to them as well. In general, the idea of other countries interfering is often considered to be negative, while in this case it might be beneficial for the people living in Transcarpathia.

## **Methods**

The approach of this thesis is mainly qualitative. A qualitative research provides more room to explore the concepts and their relationships. For this thesis I have used various research techniques: literature analysis, observation methods (vignettes) and qualitative interviews.

## **Literature Analysis**



Literature research refers to the use of existing written material. Through reflecting and combining the literature, new perspectives can be created (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007). The main resources for the theoretical part of the research have been academic books and articles. Theories on (national) identity are necessary to investigate the Hungarian (national) identity. It is also crucial to collect the various theories on kin-state politics and policies in order to understand the current situation in this field. Diverse sources, ranging from news articles and books to official documents, provided useful information.

## Observation

Goal of the observation technique was to see whether the Hungarian kin-state policies are openly noticeable in West Ukraine. The observation method was also useful in listening on the streets and in shops if and how many people in Berehove openly spoke Hungarian, and whether or not this was widely accepted. The observations have been written down and used for the analysis in Chapter 4. Some observations are given in the form of a so-called vignette, in order to really 'get the whole picture'.

## Interviews

The main aim of the interviews was to collect useful information for answering the last sub-question: *What are the benefits and/or downsides of the Hungarian kin-state politics for the Transcarpathian population?* To profit most from the interviews, in most cases a semi-structured interview was chosen. This flexible approach created space for unexpected directions. Recording tools were used to conduct and process the interviews, however not all participants wanted to be recorded. This made it harder to properly conduct and process the interviews afterwards.

*Interviews with students of the Hungarian College:* Most interviews have been done with students from the Hungarian College in Berehove. It concerned a mix of Hungarian and non-Hungarian students in order to collect information on the effects for people living in Transcarpathia (and not just Hungarians). Teachers from the Hungarian College helped with the translation of the non-Hungarian interviews. I also interviewed students without any recording material on the street, since then they spoke more openly to me about sensitive topics as the dual citizenship.

*Interviews with teachers of the Hungarian College:* It was interesting to talk with the teachers of the Hungarian College too. Teachers often know what is happening and why students choose to go to the Hungarian College. I also asked them why they stayed in Ukraine and did not migrate to Hungary.

*Interview with a Hungarian language teacher/expert in Berehove:* It was interesting to know what the main motivation of Ukrainians is for learning the Hungarian language. Do Ukrainian-speaking people want to learn the Hungarian language in order to be able to go to Hungary or even to claim their Hungarian citizenship by speaking the language?

*Interview with Rákóczi Szövetség:* Unlike the other interviews, this interview was conducted in Budapest, since this civil society association is based there. It has been founded in 1989 in order to connect with Hungarians living outside Hungary. Nowadays, its main focus is on Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries. The organization has initiated various campaigns, focusing on Hungarians across the border. Its best-known campaign centres around Hungarian school selection, to promote Hungarian schools in order to learn the Hungarian language and culture. Because this association was also present in Transcarpathia it was really useful to interview them and ask about their main incentives.

*Interview with a Dutch volunteer in a health care centre in Berehove:* What does she know about the Hungarian influences and who is it benefiting from it?

In addition, I spoke to many people in the streets about different topics as the time zone, shaping of Hungarian identity, religion and identity of the people. Because this was not recorded, people were more willing to talk openly to me.

Since for this research it is important to create a clear theoretical foundation, the next two chapters address the two main concepts in order to be able to analyse the results of the field research in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 2 - (National) Identity in the Historical Context

The concept of 'identity' is broad and used in different ways and academic fields. Identity is a key concept in this research, and in particular 'national identity'. Because of the broadness of the two concepts, it is important to clarify them. First, various scholars and theories on (national) identity will be discussed, followed by focussing on the Hungarian national identity throughout history; based on this analysis, contemporary kin-state politics might be better understood.

### Identity

Identity has been widely discussed by scholars all over the world. Wintle (1996) argues that identity is about image, not about realities, while Delanty and Rumford (2005) state that identity is a mode of self-understanding, expressed by people in ongoing narratives and situations. It is not possible to 'give' an identity, identity is always based on perceptions (Delanty & Rumford, 2005; Wintle, 1996). Therefore, it might be difficult to find the 'true' Hungarian identity. Identity is being used in everyday lives, but also in a political sense; through political motives identity can be used to convince people (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Brubaker and Cooper (2000) suggest two terms central to the notion of identity; groupness and identification. Groupness refers to a feeling of common identity, a feeling of belonging. There is always a categorical communality shared by people in a group. One could think of eating the same kind of food or going to the same church every Sunday. Customs and culture are important elements of (national) identity. It creates a sense of belonging when people share cultural traditions like national holidays, types of clothing and food (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). According to research, of all countries Hungary found it most important to share the same national customs and traditions in order to belong to the same national identity (O'Sullivan, 2017). However, having something in common and sharing something do not automatically result in a feeling of belonging together. Nevertheless, according to Brubaker and Cooper (2000), people who share a nationality can share a feeling of groupness. When people attach a high value to their nationality, this feeling could grow even stronger (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Consequently, Hungarian groupness might be a feeling shared between the Hungarian citizens in Hungary and ethnic Hungarians living abroad, for instance in Transcarpathia.

The second term used by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) is 'identification', and is split in relational and categorical identification. Relational identification means that a person can identify with the relations he or she has. Through the categorical mode a person can identify, by inclusion or exclusion of certain attributes (Brubaker & Copper, 2000). An example of the categorical mode is having the Hungarian citizenship and based on that identify with other persons having Hungarian citizenship as well. In light of this thesis, it is important whether or not people living in Transcarpathia have Hungarian citizenship. If one feels more connected to Hungary because of the Hungarian citizenship, it is quite possible that the Hungarian kin-state politics are more accepted. Feeling connected also depends on

how many people share the Hungarian citizenship / feeling. When more people feel Hungarian, it might result in a stronger shared Hungarian identity in the region.

Identity is a multiple issue and it changes according to the context. For a single person it is important to remain in touch with a group identity and its values and behaviours. This can result in a struggle between group identity and a personal identity. Social constructionism rejects the idea of a fixed identity. Social constructionism believes that identity depends on social context and is therefore subject to change (Monroe, Hankin & Vechten, 2000). In other words, according to social constructionism it might be that identity in Transcarpathia has changed over time, depending on the kin-state policies and livelihood of the people living in the area.

Although identities can change and shift over time and context, Bauman (2004) argues that ethnic identity can be very persistent. Ethnic identity can suddenly become more important when it is eroding, since all people still need some form of belonging to an identity (Bauman, 2004). People use identity as a way of making sense of the world. Politicians, however, can use identity to mobilise people along certain lines. This is also known as identity politics; it might be better to call it 'identification', however, because it is an active term implying that someone is doing this process of identifying (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000).

Identity politics often ignore the ability of different identities to mix or overlap. People who are part of a particular ethnic identity but living in another nation, can also be part of that other nation's identity. This might be the case in Transcarpathia as well, because ethnic Hungarians for example can also feel connected with Ukraine, because they are Ukrainian citizens too and live in the country, obviously. In the identity debate, this complex intra-group diversity is often ignored.

## National Identity

How to define national identity? Identity, and particularly national identity, is becoming more and more complex (Malkki, 1992). More people categorize themselves as being part of de-territorialized cultures, origins or homelands. Smith (1991) argues that in the Western model of national identity nations are considered to comprise united members of a particular cultural community. The members are made homogeneous by common symbols, traditions, myths and historical facts. The Western model is based on the idea that individuals have to belong to some nation, but can choose to which national identity he or she wants to belong (Smith, 1991). Smith (1991) lists five fundamental features of national identity: 1. A historic territory or homeland; 2. Common myths and historical memories; 3. A common, mass public culture; 4. Common legal rights and duties for all members; and 5. A common economy with territorial mobility for its members (Smith, 1991).

The non-Western concept of national identity is that a person remains part of a particular cultural community – whether one stays or moves to another nation, one's birth tells to which national identity one belongs (Smith, 1991). This is an interesting concept in relation to kin-states, and especially with regard to the complex history of Transcarpathia. All being

born in the exact same location, a grandmother could have been born in Czechoslovakia, her son in the Soviet Union and his daughter in Ukraine. According to the non-Western concept, all three have lived in the same house, but belong to various national identities, without migrating. According to the Western model, however, each individual can choose to which national identity he or she belongs. In other words, they could all choose to have the same Hungarian national identity if they feel that they (want to) belong to the Hungarian nationality.

Identity can create social and geographical borders. Van Houtum (2010) argues that borders imply that what lies within the bordered territory is in some way different than what lies outside of it (Van Houtum, 2010). So, some Hungarian people might see the Hungarian nation as the Hungary before the Treaty of Trianon, or at least see the Hungarian nation as the territory where all Hungarians live, parts of neighbouring countries included. Van Houtum (2010) calls this 'bordering'; a group of individuals claim territories and cultural attributes to belong to their specific (Hungarian) identity. In the process of claiming one's identity and defining what is included, it also becomes clear what is excluded. This process is called 'othering' (Van Houtum, 2009). Othering can be done in different ways, but in the context of Hungary, othering is strengthened by using particular narratives and illustrations. The geographical map of pre-Trianon Hungary is displayed everywhere; by showing these maps and using the narratives about history it can be used to legitimise political action. Furthermore the 'othering', can create a national socio-cultural space, of which a national identity can be part of (Van Houtum, 2010).

## Ethnic and Civil National Identity

According to Shang and Jang (2015), national identity can be divided in two dimensions: ethnic and civil. The ethnic dimension consists of fixed cultural markers and ancestry, while the civil dimension consists of an imagined kinship through accepting the same political institutions, for example Hungarian institutions (Shang & Jang, 2015). Ethnic nationalism, according to Smith (1993), is a continuation of pre-existing ethnic ties through shared rituals and memories. The focus of this identity is more on customs, folk history and common ancestry. The two main building blocks of ethnic identity are religion and language, often acquired at birth, which become the primordial characteristics of an ethnic group (Smith, 1993). Western definitions of civic identity refer to a person's sense of belonging to a group, the term national identity is used to denote a political dimension. This concept does not contain an ethnic component; it includes a person's connection and commitment to a state, regardless of the legal status of ethnicity (Atkins & Hart, 2003). Kohn (1961) argues that in the Central European context the notion of a civic or national identity related to a politically bounded state or nation does not make sense. A civic or national identity in the Central European region began as an ethnocultural identity that may have contributed to later-established political boundaries (Kohn, 1961). Kohn (1961) believes that in Western states an

identity based on a civic connection was seen as a key component in building and maintaining democratic traditions, valuing diversity and inclusion (Kohn, 1961).

### Language, Place and Religion as Essential Symbols of Identity

Language is an important symbol of identity; speaking the same language gives a sense of belonging to the group, and a sense of belonging to a national identity (Byram, 2006). For states, especially modern states, language is an important element of unification of the country. The German language was a key factor in the unification of Germany; nowadays, language can become an important symbol for independence movements, for example the Basque language in Spain (Taylor, 2017). According to the Pew Research Center, in every country language is really bound to its national identity. In Hungary 81 percent finds it important that a person speaks the Hungarian language in order to belong to the national identity of the country (Pew Research Institute, 2016). In other words, speaking the Hungarian language is very important for Hungarians, probably also when living in territories outside of Hungary. The research referred to does not include countries in which a multitude of languages is spoken; it might be that in those countries, language is less important for the national identity. The official state language in Ukraine is obviously Ukrainian; other languages, like Russian or other minority languages, are labelled as 'regional language'. This label allows the use of the minority language in schools and other public institutions, in case such a minority exceeds ten percent of the population (Kirichenko, 2020).

Over the years the state language in Transcarpathia has often changed. From 1867-1918 Hungarian was the official state language, because the region was part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. When the region became part of the Czech-Slovak republic between 1918-1939, Czechoslovak became the official language. In 1939 the region was Carpathian Ukraine, so the state language became Ukrainian. When in 1939-1944 the region became part of the Hungarian Kingdom, Hungarian was made the official state language again. In the Soviet Union (1945-1991), Russian became the official state language. In 1991 Ukrainian once more became the state language. During the past 153 years, the Hungarian language was obligatory for 56 years, and the Ukrainian language for 29 years (Csernicskó & Ferenc, 2011). When people left the school before 1990 in the Soviet Union, and did not attend a Ukrainian school, they probably didn't learn the Ukrainian language at all during the school education. Changing state language is not that easy. It needs a lot of implementation time. Not knowing the official state language can lead to major difficulties. For many jobs the official state language is required and for official appointments at the court for example, Ukrainian is needed as well. Not having (enough) knowledge of the state language can therefore lead to exclusion; language policies may foster "separation" and "isolation" (Chircu & Negreanu, 2010). Arguably, the Hungarian identity will be strengthened if ethnic Hungarians don't feel part of the Ukrainian society.

Not only language is a crucial component of the Hungarian identity, place is also a construct where shared experiences and symbolic representations converge to create complex social networks. Buildings, for instance, can recreate a country's culture by decorating it with the

national flag and other national symbols like statues of important heroes. By using these symbols, through symbolic representation, a building can function as a Hungarian place (Harvey, 1993).

Religion can be an important part of (national) identity as well. According to the Pew Research Institute, worldwide the importance of religion is declining, but in the case of the Hungarians, however, 43 percent say that being part of the dominant religious group is very/somewhat important to truly share their national identity. The dominant religion in Hungary is Catholicism, followed by Protestantism as a much smaller group. The Christian religion includes both Catholicism and Protestantism. The Pew Research Center found that 29 percent of the Hungarians in Hungary find it very important to be a Christian so as to be fully Hungarian (Pew Research Center, 2017). So, Christianity may play an important role for ethnic Hungarians in Transcarpathia as well and could strengthen the shared Hungarian identity among ethnic Hungarians.

### Historical Perspective on Hungarian National Identity

Shared history strengthens a feeling of a common identity too. People's perceptions of history are a result of a process in which events are selectively organized (Friedman, 1992). Friedman (1992) argues that this organization of events results in a representation of the past that leads up to a person's idea about the present and future. In other words, how people see the present strongly connects with how they see the past. This relates to many issues, identity included. Identity is connected to how people perceive themselves and the past. Therefore, an important strategy for many politicians is the construction of the past. When history is used, the heroic version is (almost) always preferred over the darker version. So when history is used to promote identity, politicians focus on events and periods that have a positive association and binding qualities (Friedman, 1992). Van de Wijdeven (2018) argues that the contemporary narrative of the history of Hungary is shaped by the current government by new history books, exhibitions of particular events in history and (re)new(ed) monuments (Van de Wijdeven, 2018). According to Van de Wijdeven (2018), it is clear that history influences the present, in various ways (Van de Wijdeven, 2018). For that reason, it is good to look into the history of Hungary and which part or historical period is being used in the current construction of the past – and why.

The national anthem of Hungary already gives away that the Hungarians have had a complex history:

<i>O God, bless the nation of Hungary</i>	<i>Isten, áldd meg a magyart</i>
<i>With your grace and bounty</i>	<i>Jó kedvvel, bőséggel,</i>
<i>Extend over it your guarding arm</i>	<i>Nyújts feléje védő kart,</i>
<i>During strife with its enemies</i>	<i>Ha küzd ellenséggel;</i>
<i>Long torn by ill fate</i>	<i>Bal sors akit régen tép,</i>



*Bring upon it a time of relief*

*This nation has suffered for all sins*

*Of the past and of the future!*

*Hozz rá víg esztendőt,*

*Megbűnhötte már e nép*

*A multat s jövődőt!*

According to the chronicles, the history of the Kingdom of Hungary starts in the year 1000 or 1001, when Stefan (István), member of the Arpád dynasty, became king of Hungary. He is seen as the founder of Christian Hungary. In 1241, Hungary was plundered by 35,000 Mongolian archers on horses. After this tragic event, Hungary was weakened and German, Polish and Austrian kings followed each other in becoming king of Hungary. During the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Hungary became powerful and rich under two powerful rulers: King Sigismund (1368-1437) and King Matthias Corvinus (1443-1490). Meanwhile, however, the Ottoman Empire became more powerful as well and in 1526, after a long period of resistance, a part of Hungary finally became part of the Ottoman Empire. The Hungarian Kingdom was split up; current Slovakia and the Austrian-Hungarian borderlands were formally still part of Hungary, but soon this area became part of the Habsburg Empire. The current Romanian province of Transylvania and a large part of Hungary became an independent monarchy within the Ottoman Empire (Van de Wijdeven, 2018). This rather complex situation would last for over 150 years (see map 1).



Map 1: Ottoman Empire (Yellow) between 1541-1699. And the remaining parts of Hungary in blue, which became part of the Habsburg Empire.



In 1683 the Habsburg Empire incorporated the remaining Hungarian land into its empire. The relatively empty Hungarian countryside was seen as the Habsburg Empire's new location for growing grain. Because of this, the composition of the population considerably changed, with Jewish settlers playing a main role in the middle class and new businesses. Several attempts to revolt against the Habsburgs failed, but, as in so many other countries, the 19th century gave rise to a wave of nationalism (Van de Wijdeven, 2018). However, class was still more important than ethnicity; the feudal laws in Hungary made a distinction between nobles and non-nobles, rather than between Magyars and non-Magyars (Waterbury, 2010). Vambery (1994) describes how before 1830 the multilingual citizens lived together in perfect harmony and peace. Up until 1844 the national language in the Hungarian part of the empire was Latin in combination with the German language, the second most common language among the ruling class. Only in 1844 the Hungarian language was proclaimed to be the official language of the administration and governance in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Empire (Waterbury, 2010; Vambery, 1994).

In 1848 Hungarians declared their independence. However, after 18 months the Austrian Emperor, with some help from Russian forces, brought the Hungarians back into the Habsburg Empire. However, because of the political power shifts taking place all over Europe, it became harder not to give some kind of independence to Hungary; the so-called double monarchy came into existence. Austria and Hungary became separate countries but were still together, linked through some institutions like the army. The dual monarchy marked the beginning of a modern and new Hungarian state; the reality was, however, that ethnic Hungarians were not the majority in the territory of Hungary. Nevertheless, the independence of Hungary through the double state monarchy was seen as the legitimization of Magyar nationalism. The nobility held the power in Hungary, and they wanted to keep it that way. Therefore, the elite initiated the so-called Magyarization policy; the Hungarian identity was imposed on all the people living within the Hungarian borders, including the Slovak, Romanian and Croat minorities. The empowerment of minorities was now seen as a threat to the new political control of the Hungarian political elite. Minorities had no voice, just like almost all other people living in Hungary. Only 8 percent of the population were allowed to vote (Van de Wijdeven, 2018; Waterbury, 2010).

Since the creation of the double monarchy there has always been a desire to transform the Hungarian multinational state into a purely Magyar national and centralist one. Kálmán Tisza, prime minister in 1875, declared that there could only be one viable nation within the borders of Hungary and that was the Hungarian one. The 'others' were not included in his speech. The 'others' were the Slovaks, Romanians, Serbs, Croats, Germans and Ruthenes living in the kingdom as well. This period during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is often referred to as the period of 'romantic nationalism'. The symbol of the 'nation' was the centrally enforced national language; the Hungarian language was seen as the only official language of Hungary

(Romsics, 2001; Lendvai, 2004). This official language was enforced through the 1833, 1879 and 1891 Education Laws. These laws made the teaching of the Hungarian language compulsory in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. As a consequence, soon there were no Slovak schools in Northern Hungary left. The proportion of purely Hungarian schools increased from 42 to 56 per cent. Non-Hungarian schools decreased to a meagre 14 per cent of the schools, the remaining being mixed language schools. Between 1899 and 1914, in just 20 per cent of the primary schools a non-Hungarian language was taught (Lendvai, 2004). The rebirth of Hungarianness in terms of the Hungarian language as the mother tongue became a very visible symbol of the triumph of the national identity. As stated before, language is an important element of national identity. The tragic consequence was, however, the day-to-day provocation of the other half of the population; the mother tongue was to become the essence of the ethnic national identity (Lendvai, 2004). Some people even went further with the Magyarization policies. Grünwald, a descendant of an ancient Carpathian German family, suggested the abolition of the Nationalities Law. He argued that it was the destiny of the Magyars to assimilate the 'others' and to absorb them into a superior people. In 1896, Agoston Trefort, then Minister for Religious Affairs and Education, declared he didn't want to force Magyarization upon anybody, but adding that the Hungarian state could only survive as a pure Magyar one (Lendvai, 2004). According to Paul Lendvai (2004), the Magyarization of other nationalities was cultural in nature and never racial; it was just referring to language. Every person living in Hungary had the same chances, regardless of their background. The policies made during the period were generally political in nature and nationally motivated, not personally. This is in stark contrast with the Interbellum and the post-1945 period (Lendvai, 2004).

The rather unrealistic romantic belief in the mission of one national state almost became a national secular religion. More and more people agreed to the statement of Deák Ferenc in 1867: "There are several nationalities in Hungary but only one nation." One of the few persons to openly warn about the consequences of Magyarization and demanding tolerance and equality, deputy Lajos Mocsáry, was expelled from his own party and was hounded out of political life (Lendvai, 2004). Throughout the years, this romantic nationalism found plenty of emulators who wanted to represent the historic-heroic tradition of greater Hungary, and this romantic nationalism persists until today. Romantic nationalism has been connected to all forms of cultural life: from theatre, poetry to different forms of literature. István Horvát (1784-1846) is a true representative of this romantic nationalism; as a teacher at the University in Pest, he inspired many people with his views on the Hungarian history. He claimed for example that in the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve had spoken Hungarian, and it went without saying that Hercules was also a Hungarian. That Horvát found willing listeners to these theories showed, according to Szerb (1941), the optimistic national self-perception. Without doubt Horvát was the most bizarre scholar and writer of Hungarian history books, but writing about the glorious past was quite normal (Lendvai, 2004). Romantic nationalism

books were important for the ideological basis of Hungarian hegemony (even though in 1880 the share of the Hungarian population in Hungary was only 41.6 per cent). Some politicians published books about their perceptions of the future of Hungary and its population. Around the turn of the previous century, Gusztáv Beksics predicted that with a higher birth-rate and the power of (forced) assimilation, by 1950 the population of Hungary would probably have risen to 24 million, 17 million of which would be pure Magyars (Lendvai, 2004).

Waterbury (2010), however, argues that during the period of 1790-1920 Hungarian national identity was not primarily defined in cultural, ethnic or linguistic terms, but that it was rather political in nature, more territorial in character and driven by political calculations of the ruling classes. Hungarian nationalism became increasingly ethnic and inclusive. Nationalism was used by the ruling class to maintain in power. By defining themselves as the true representatives of the Hungarian nation, and more importantly as its protectors, they tried to combine loyalty to the nation and Hungarian culture with loyalty to their own position of power (Waterbury, 2010).

### First World War and Treaty of Trianon

June 28, 1914, became a defining turning point in the relative quiet period of the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Franz Ferdinand, the royal prince of Austria-Hungary, was assassinated in Sarajevo. Because of the complex system of alliances, the First World War started with almost the entire European continent getting involved. When World War I ended, the various people who were ruled by the Habsburg Empire all longed for their own state. The Slovenian, Croat and Serbian people formed Yugoslavia. The Czech and Slovak people became united as part of Czechoslovakia, while Austria and Hungary became independent republics (Lendvai, 2004). The allies supported these developments. The president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, stated: "The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development" (Wilson, 1918).

Right after the declarations of independence, the newly-formed countries marched towards the Hungarian borders to redraw the new borders in their favour. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were the first, followed by Romania that relative quietly rearranged the eastern borders of Hungary. Territory that had belonged to Hungary for centuries, was taken by neighbouring countries. The Hungarian government at that time had no military or political resources to act in any way; more importantly, it was not allowed by the allies to react militarily. Many army officers couldn't stand the situation and planned a coup d'état, but according to Horthy, the most powerful military leader, the time was not ripe yet.

In the aftermath of World War I, the Hungarian Communist Party did not only declare the Hungarian Council republic, it also declared war on the Slovaks, Romanians and Czechs. The newly-founded army tried to reconquer some territory, with almost the opposite result; in particular the Romanian army occupied much territory and almost reached Budapest. The popular support for the Hungarian Communist armed forces declined very fast. On August 3,

to the surprise of almost everyone, the Romanian army even occupied Budapest; this lasted for 133 days. After years of warfare, the Hungarian economy was totally destroyed. In March 1920, admiral Horthy became the governor of Hungary (Lendvai, 2004; Van de Wijdeven, 2018).

That same year, the most traumatic treaty in Hungarian history was signed: the Treaty of Trianon. The French and British had decided to give two-thirds of the Hungarian territory to the neighbouring countries, as a 'punishment' for Hungary fighting on the wrong side during the war (Van de Wijdeven, 2018; Lendvai, 2004).



Figure 1: Ethnic distribution of ethnic Hungarians (in red) in time of the Treaty.

Trianon meant the vivisection of the nation, the end of historical Hungary (see figure 1, 2 and map 2). After the treaty, only 93,000 of the 282,000 square kilometres of the pre-war kingdom remained; the population now numbered just 7.6 million as compared to the previous number of 18.3 million people (Lendvai 2004; Van de Wijdeven, 2018).



Map 2: Two-Third of the Kingdom of Hungary was divided to the neighbour countries.

Since the partition of Poland, no other country was treated so mercilessly by the Great Powers. According to the census figures, from now on 3,227,000 ethnic Hungarians lived under foreign rule. The other 7,5 million people who became inhabitants of the neighbouring countries were non-ethnic Hungarians. Between 1918 and 1920 approximately 350,000-400,000 people left or fled the separated territories. Almost every Hungarian family was somehow hit by the Treaty of Trianon. Economically the country was also hit very hard. Hungary lost a large part of the essential national railway system, crucial industrial regions and five out of the ten largest cities. The 'coronation city' of Pozsony was suddenly called Bratislava, Kolozsvár became Kassa and Temesvár became Cluj (Van de Wijdeven 2018; Lendvai, 2004). This obviously resulted in Hungarian indignation. Although the American president Wilson had advocated for self-determination for all people of former Austria-Hungary, according to the Hungarians it apparently didn't apply to them. Hungarians collectively saw themselves as victims; three days of national mourning were announced. Hungary became diplomatically isolated, mainly because of Horthy, who tried everything to reject the treaty, albeit unsuccessfully (Van de Wijdeven, 2018).



The remaining rump Hungary became a homogeneous state. In 1920 only 10.4 per cent did not use the Hungarian language as its mother tongue. Ernest Gellner, a political scientist, has sketched the Trianon situation as a painting. Before Trianon, Hungary was a painting of different colours, different patterns, complexity and plurality. The painting after the Treaty of Trianon was something completely different; straight surfaces, little shading and each part clearly separated from the others (Lendvai, 2004).



Figure 2: Scale comparisons of the consequence of the Treaty of Trianon were made.

For all Hungarians 'Trianon' is the most devastating tragedy in history. It is a trauma from which Hungary has never completely recovered, regardless of the ruling political parties. Everywhere, in kindergartens and schools to politics and media, the idea that one day the lost territories might be re-annexed was kept alive (Lendvai, 2004).

After the treaty was signed, the ruling classes of Hungary underwent a legitimacy crisis. The conservative right-wing government focused on a project of national unity and revisionism in order to keep its political position after the loss of two-thirds of the country. This need of the ruling elite to stay in power during Hungary's traumatic times, created the link between governing legitimacy and the ability to protect the trans-border Hungarian nation and its unique culture and language. The Hungarian regime still wanted to maintain control over those parts of the nation that were no longer under direct Hungarian control by creating cross-border networks of cultural and political support (Waterbury, 2010). Between 1920 and 1930 the restoration of post-war Hungary went well, but border revision became a more unlikely outcome (Waterbury, 2010). Admiral Miklós Horthy became very

powerful. He created a sense of common suffering, the consequence of the Treaty of Trianon (Waterbury, 2010). He used Hungarian national mythology to strengthen this 'suffering of the nation'. Hungary, he said, is a civilizing force in the region and therefore also a protector of the Christian West (Romsics, 2001). The Hungarian government started to develop the first substantial cross-border forms of subsidies and support for ethnic Hungarians beyond the Hungarian borders. This was a risky approach for the Hungarian government, since it had to strike a balance between its desire to fight the assimilation of ethnic Hungarians across the borders and maintain its influence in the annexed territories to get international support for the revision of the post-Trianon borders. By creating social organizations, the Hungarian government could support Hungarian schools, cultural institutions, churches and political bodies without being accused of interference in another country (Waterbury, 2010).

## Second World War

By 1930, the international economic crisis affected Hungary as well. Horthy appointed a new prime minister, Gömbös, who delivered positive economic results (Van de Wijdeven, 2018). Although he also reached some diplomatic successes, it became clear that a revision of the post-Trianon borders was not in the making. This led to a disastrous intensification of the relations with Nazi Germany (Waterbury, 2010). In 1935 Hitler promised Gömbös that he would support Hungary in undoing the Treaty of Trianon; however, Hitler also said that Hungary should only claim parts of Czechoslovakia. On November 2, 1938, Hitler and his Italian counterpart Mussolini allocated the southern part of Slovakia to Hungary. Horthy invaded southern Slovakia without a fight. In March 1939, when Hitler occupied the remaining free part of Czechia, Hungary was allowed to claim Carpatho-Ruthenia (nowadays west-Ukraine and Eastern Slovakia). With this territorial gain Hungary became neighbours with Poland again and it had access to an important railway link. Horthy thanked Hitler and subsequently brought up the Transylvania region in Romania. He now wanted to 'liberate' the Hungarians living there. In August 1940 Nazi-Germany and Italy gave half of Transylvania to Hungary, two weeks later the annexation was complete. Successfully reclaiming Hungarian territories contributed to Horthy's popularity; within three years, the territory of Hungary had increased from 93,073 to 171,753 km<sup>2</sup>, while the population grew from 5 to almost 15 million people (Van de Wijdeven, 2018). However, a 1941 census showed that just half of the people were ethnic Hungarians; not only the 'lost' Hungarians returned, but the ethnic minorities from before World War I as well (Waterbury, 2010).

Because of the deal with Hitler, Hungary had to allow free passage for German troops through Hungary. Although the Hungarian government was not very pleased with this prerequisite and Horthy also became more doubtful about Hitler's policy towards the Jews, the Treaty of Trianon remained the most important issue by far. In April 1941 the Germans invaded Yugoslavia and Hungary was quick to claim Croatia. The friendship between Hitler and Horthy became colder, however, and by 1942-1943 Horthy came to realize that the

collaboration with Hitler wasn't the best strategic decision; Hungary had already lost 180,000 men at Stalingrad who were forced to join the German armed forces. When the Soviet Red army was approaching the Hungarian borders, Horthy requested the withdrawal of all Hungarian troops abroad so that they could defend Hungary. Hitler told Horthy that Germany would occupy Hungary instead, which did take place in March 1944. Horthy remained as head of state and all government functions and institutions remained in Hungarian hands. In the meantime, the Germans 'helped' Hungary with the 'Jewish problem'. When Horthy tried to strike a deal with the fast-approaching Soviets, he was forced to resign. After the end of World War II, Horthy's mission to reclaim all lost territories was completely nullified, since Hungary's borders were once more reshaped according to the Treaty of Trianon. For the Communists who took over, the pre-Trianon border was not an issue: nationalism would only be an ideological threat and for the next forty years 'Trianon' was moved to the political background (Van de Wijdeven, 2018; Lendvai, 2003; Waterbury, 2010).

However, after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Communist regime, the Treaty of Trianon was not forgotten. The first post-1989 prime minister of Hungary, József Antall, claimed that in 'spiritual sense' he was prime minister of all 15 million Hungarians, so including the Hungarians in the neighbouring countries (Van de Wijdeven, 2018). The new government added an Act XXXI to the Constitution: "The Republic of Hungary bears responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living outside its borders and shall promote and foster their relations with Hungary" (Toth, 2000). By including an external population under the Hungarian governance and political responsibility, the focus of legitimacy shifted from the political community of the Hungarian state to the Hungarian cultural community beyond state boundaries (Waterbury, 2010).

## Transcarpathia

In 1991 Transcarpathia officially became a region of newly-independent Ukraine. The regional consciousness of Transcarpathian Ukrainians expressed itself, however, by a regionalist movement striving for autonomy. A referendum on autonomy that was held in December 1991 received an overwhelming majority. This was, however, not respected by the Ukrainian government in Kiev (Jordan, 2013). According to Jordan (2013), Transcarpathian regionalism was strong during the early 1990s, combined with a lack of loyalty to modern Ukraine. In 1994 researchers of the University of Cambridge asked to the Transcarpathian population 'To which country should Transcarpathia belong?' – 52 percent wanted to remain part of Ukraine, 13 percent was in favour of shifting to Hungary, 9 percent wanted to be part of Slovakia while 14 percent looked for independence for the region (Jordan, 2013). In light of the history of the country it is not very surprising that just 50



percent of the respondents wanted to be part of Ukraine, given that the region was almost never part of Ukraine.

## Conclusion

There is a famous anecdote that summarizes the history of the Treaty of Trianon and the consequences for Transcarpathia very well:

“A visitor, encountering one of the oldest local inhabitants, asks about his life. The reply: ‘I was born in Austria-Hungary, I went to school in Czechoslovakia, I did my army service in Horthy’s Hungary, followed by a spell in prison in the USSR. Now I am ending my days in independent Ukraine.’ The visitor expresses surprise at how much of the world the old man has seen. ‘But no!’, he responds, ‘I’ve never left this village!’” (Butt 2002, p. 155).

That’s why (national) identity becomes even more complex in an area as Transcarpathia where inhabitants have become citizens of various countries over the last century without migrating. In this chapter I addressed several theories on national identity, some of which I will use in the description and analysis of Transcarpathia in Chapter 4. I discussed Smith’s (1991) Western and non-Western concept of national identity. In the Western model nations are seen as united members of a particular cultural community, based on the idea that individuals have to belong to a nation, but can choose to which national identity they personally belong. The non-Western model argues that the birth of a person determines to which national identity one belongs (Smith, 1991). This is an interesting concept in light of the (geographical) history of Transcarpathia, during which the borders have changed several times over the last 100 years. The question is whether their identity is changed alongside the borders as well, or whether they still belong to the country where they lived metaphorically 100 years ago.

In this chapter, I addressed that religion and language are essential parts of ethnic identity, since they also create a sense of belonging. They can, however, also foster separation and isolation. The Hungarian language is quite different from the Ukrainian one; although they are neighbours, they cannot understand each other’s languages. So, if a person only speaks one of the languages, he or she might feel isolated at times when in a shop for example only the other language is being spoken. During my observations and interviews I therefore tried to find out which (mix of) languages are spoken in Berehove, and if people are willing to learn Hungarian and/or Ukrainian, and why.

In this chapter I also gave a historic context of Hungary to understand the Hungarian kin-state politics, which will be elaborated in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3 - Kin-State Politics and Policies

In this chapter the general concept of 'kin-state' will be elaborated and kin-state politics will be discussed. Next, I will describe Hungarian kin-state politics over time; how kin-state policies were developed, so as to create a better understanding of (former) Hungarian kin-state politics and the current situation.

### Kin-State Politics and Policies

'Kin-state politics' is the term used to describe the Hungarian politics and policies towards Hungarians living in neighbouring countries. Hungary is a kin-state; a state that pursues policies directed at the members of a co-ethnic group living abroad, (often) in neighbouring countries. It is not the same as diaspora, since ethnic diasporas are more likely formed through migration and are often settled in places far away from the homeland (Erőss, Kovály & Tátrai, 2017). Trans-border minorities, like the Hungarians living in West Ukraine, exist because of shifting borders in the past. In other words, the people involved did not move to another country, the area they lived in 'moved' to another state. For this reason, this group is referred to as a trans-border ethnic community (Erőss, Kovály, & Tátrai, 2017). In the words of Judith Tóth, a Hungarian scholar: The formation of the Hungarian population in the Hungarian basin is not (characteristically) related to the migration of people, but to the 'migration' of state borders in the twentieth century and is therefore not a diaspora (Tóth, 2004).

Kin-state policies are a complex phenomenon. The policies raise questions about membership and belonging, identity and loyalty, and the boundaries between the cultural and political community. Members of trans-border ethnic groups may possess the citizenship of states of which they are not full members, or at least not seen as full members of the majority nation. These ethnic groups living in the neighbouring countries remain important to the mother state in a cultural, social, economic sense or even in numbers. When there are such ties to one country, it can stoke fears of minority colonialism and disloyalty to the state of residence. Kin-state policies can violate a state's sovereignty by giving forms of extraterritorial membership, such as dual nationality, voting rights or other special benefits granted by the kin-state. These policies cannot just violate a state's sovereignty but destabilize regional relationships as well, because political elites use ethnic ties to justify their nationalistic claims and their political agendas. In other words, kin-state politics can have a large effect, domestically as well as internationally (Waterbury, 2010). According to Csérge (2005), kin-state activism often includes three main goals: strengthening co-ethnic communities abroad, promoting cross-border interaction, and enabling co-ethnics to move to the kin-state. The first goal is cultural, but also social-economic and institutional in character. Promoting cross-border interaction has a social, economic as well as cultural dimension. The third and final goal, enabling co-ethnics to move to the co-state, is shaped by offering preferential conditions for naturalization (Csérge, 2005). Waterbury (2010) refers to

kin-state politics as double layered actions to engage and protect the so-called ethnic kin communities in neighbouring or nearby states, and, in addition, to create advantages based on this policy. Specific actions might range from political-legal action to diplomatic advocacy. Economic actions might include financial aid or funding of cultural and/or educational programs. Symbolic actions include offering citizenship to co-ethnics (Waterbury, 2010). Ethnic citizenship is the most powerful and controversial type of kin-state influence. Kin-states introduce non-resident citizenship for various reasons. Ethnic citizenship offers benefits, trading rights, identity and mobility for kin-state members in exchange for participation in and loyalty to projects of the kin-state (Koslowski, 2003). In some cases, ethnic citizenship is offered as a sign of external minority protection, but it can also be used for geopolitical reasons. Kin-states hope that it will be beneficial to the economy and/or that the state itself will benefit from the political support by giving people the opportunity to vote (Pogonyi, 2017). Citizenship is the right to have rights, more precisely the right to claim rights (Arendt, 1968; Isin, 2009). When people receive citizenship, they become part of the people; through the state they have power as voters and they receive other rights accorded to full members only. According to Pogonyi (2017), the construction of the people through citizenship law is an ideologically tinted project, determining the nature of the political regime as well (Pogonyi, 2017).

Furthermore, kin-state ties can increase the migration and provide an exit option for radicals that may calm tensions. If people use their restored citizenship to relocate to their 'motherland', tensions might easily be resolved. Getting kin-state citizenship can also be seen as an opportunity to maintain ties with the kin-state but at the same time pursuing naturalization in the state of residence; by receiving the recognition of belonging to both states, it might result in improved integration and acceptance (Waterbury, 2010).

The Hungarian concept of nation (in Hungarian '*nemzet*'), explicitly refers to not just those who share ties of history, culture and language, but includes the Hungarians outside of the borders as well. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hungary's engagement with its ethnic kin population has always been a very symbolic and emotional issue. Memories of the lost lands, for instance in books and poetry, have kept alive the idea of the Hungarian nation as one, even if it is separated by borders. This feeling is also part of the Constitution, in which an amended paragraph clearly states: "The Republic of Hungary bears responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living outside its borders" (Hungarian Constitution, 2011).

As stated before in chapter 2 József Antall, the first democratically elected prime minister after the Soviet era stated in 1990 that in spirit he considered himself to be the prime minister of 15 million Hungarians, including the 5 million ethnic Hungarians outside of the borders of Hungary, 3.5 million of which in the neighbouring countries. Following this statement of the prime minister, the neighbouring countries became nervous and tried to figure out the real intentions of the Hungarian government. There was some fear that this aggressive nationalism could lead to conflicts (Waterbury, 2010). According to Waterbury

(2010), the Hungarian government is willing to take the risk of deteriorated relations with its neighbours because its kin-state policies serve a political and strategic purpose. It does not see the current situation as a moral obligation of ethnic affiliation, nor as a rebirth of nationalism after the communist era. The shift towards increased kin-state engagement is primarily driven by the interests and perceptions of the political elites in Hungary. They try to get access to the three sets of resources represented by ethnic Hungarians abroad. The first is acquiring material resources for economic gains; ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring states are seen as a potential resource for businesses in need of labour, and this is used as a selling point for government policies. Second, Hungarian language speaking people abroad are seen as a cultural-linguistic resource for defining the boundaries of national identity. Finally, kin-state policies are used as a political resource to create or maintain legitimacy and support for kin-state elites (Waterbury, 2010).

Toth (2004) argues that external kin groups are so important because they have a role in state-building, the construction of national identity, and cultural reproduction. National myths are constructed, and ethnic Hungarians play a large role in this. These myths are used to legitimize nationalist political agendas (Toth, 2004). This drive to include ethnic kin in neighbouring states as part of the newly constituted community is referred to as 'trans sovereign nationalism' (Csergo & Goldgeier, 2004). It is part of the national pride to have a group beyond the borders that maintains its cultural identity and connections to its kin-state. Through language and culture such populations keep the influence of the homeland alive, in a territory that was once part of the home country. This sense of loyalty from both sides can be part of the process of nation-building and maintaining elite dominance at home (Sherman, 1999). Therefore, any threat to this kin-group is framed as a threat to the unity of the nation. By reframing the current historical myths and a discourse of the nation and national identity, leaders can position themselves as saviours of the nation, correcting the wrongs of the past (Brubaker, 1996).

Nationalist policies can also be used in times of political transformation. Politicians want to move the focus away from problems within the country, outward and also use the ethnic population abroad through gaining the right to vote (Shain, 2000). Shain (2000) argues that co-ethnics might be considered by a new regime as the key group for domestic transformation. Or, as Sherman (1999) argues, as a way for governments to redefine the base of their legitimacy, particularly in times of political or economic crisis, or weakened state sovereignty. Not only internal problems might trigger kin-state politics, however; external factors can trigger an increased kin-state engagement as well, for instance shifting economic and geopolitical alliances or realignments of power in interstate relations. If in neighbouring states assimilation policies are implemented, this may lead to a response from the 'other side'. They may try to 'pull' the co-ethnics back. This can be done through transnational networks and feelings of loyalty to the nation or by creating and implementing new rules for cross-border mobility, such as giving members ethnic identity cards. In other words, states can and do utilize a combination of domestic and foreign policy tools in order

to extend their sovereignty beyond state borders, to maintain cross-border ties of loyalty and membership (Shain, 2000; Sherman, 1999).

Kin-state elites can choose various policy tools to shape relations with populations abroad. Waterbury (2010) discusses five of those policy tools. The first one is trying to improve the status of the minority in the neighbouring country/countries through diplomatic advocacy or protection through treaties. The second policy tool is about funding external kin-community organizations and initiating political, cultural and/or educational institutions in these kin-communities. The third tool focuses on offering limited or full forms of political citizenship, for instance dual citizenship or dual nationality, voting rights or other forms of representation. The fourth option is to offer limited or full forms of social citizenship through access to the welfare state and labour market or by giving diaspora members direct subsidies. The fifth and final policy tool focuses on extending benefits of symbolic and cultural membership through rhetorical inclusion, trans-border cultural exchanges and ethnic identity cards. A combination of these various policies is often applied to keep the minority in the neighbouring country connected to the kin-state (Waterbury, 2010). According to Waterbury (2010), it is essential that a kin-state keeps the needs and demands of the kin population in mind, so as to strike a clear balance between the needs of the kin-state and the needs of the minority in a neighbouring country (Waterbury, 2010).

### Hungarian Kin-State Politics from 1989 until 2010

During the early 1990s Hungary found itself in a transition period of becoming a democracy, developing a market economy and creating truly independent and sovereign policies. The new condition of becoming a well-functioning democracy had a significant impact on policies towards ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring countries. In 1990, the centre-right, populist MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum) won the first free elections. The party ensured the electorate that the plight of helping ethnic Hungarian communities would be an ideological, high-priority issue for the new Hungarian government. Fidesz (Federation of Young Democrats), that had barely made it over the 5 percent parliamentary threshold in 1994, began to reframe the ethnic-kin question as an ideological and organizational resource. Fidesz rebranded itself as a right-wing party, convinced that that would provide better prospects for gaining power. Instead of trying to overcome the deep urban/rural cultural and political cleavages, it focused on a new strategy of kin-state nationalism. After the 1998 elections Fidesz gained political control, with Viktor Orbán as the new prime minister (Szelényi, 2019). 1998 also signified the start of a shift in Hungary's kin-state policies. One factor of this policy shift was Fidesz, the other being the growing realization that the anticipated accession to the European Union might constrain Hungary's relationships with ethnic Hungarians living abroad. Especially the Schengen visa regime was a 'wake-up call' for many Hungarians. Schengen meant that Hungarians living in Romania, Serbia and Ukraine could no longer cross the border without visa (Waterbury, 2010). This would mean that

Hungary would become the eastern border of the European Union and that the co-ethnics would be stuck on the wrong side of the new 'Iron Curtain' (Tóth, 2002).

The new Fidesz government and its desire to maintain strong cross-border networks resulted in the 2001 Status Law, which granted special access, benefits and subsidies to the approximately three million ethnic Hungarians living in neighbouring countries. This law expressed a more intense approach to the Hungarian minority issue than had been seen previously. However, the law failed to come up with a solution concerning the 'Schengen dilemma,' nor did it overcome the geopolitical realities that constrained its full implementation (Waterbury, 2010). According to Tóth (2000), one of the greatest fears of the Schengen Zone was that it would result in substantial differences in the livelihood for Hungarians, depending on which side of the border one would live. For one Hungarian it would mean economic, social and cultural freedom, for the other it would not (Tóth, 2000). As a result, many ethnic Hungarians might choose to emigrate to Hungary. Since public opinion in Hungary at that time had increasingly negative views concerning 'foreign' Hungarians migrating to Hungary, support for an expansion of Hungarian citizenship was lacking, even for the people living in the former Hungarian territories (Csepeli & Örkény, 1996). A consequence of huge waves of immigration of Hungarians originating from the former territories was that the dream of preserving and restoring pre-Trianon Hungary would be lost for good. Based on these considerations, the Hungarian government tried to come up with a solution for the Schengen problem, while keeping the ethnic Hungarians in their 'native land' (Waterbury, 2010).

The Status Law was meant to give ethnic Hungarians ethnic identity cards, as well as particular benefits and 'membership' in the Hungarian nation. The benefits included education, transportation, cultural and health issues. The most important benefit however, was the short-term employment card for Hungarians who received the identity card. The identity card integrated the ethnic Hungarians in a social and cultural sense, but not politically. In the course of time, the Status Law became more politicized. It was criticized by European institutions, arguing that no state should grant quasi-official functions to non-governmental institutions in another country. It was also recommended that the term 'nation', with which Hungary refers to ethnic Hungarians outside the state as well, should not be used in any ambiguous form, because it might be interpreted as the non-acceptance of existing state borders. In response to all the (international) criticism the Orbán government did sign a memorandum with the Romanian government, extending the employment-related privileges to all Romanian citizens, regardless of their ethnic background (Pogonyi, 2017; Waterbury, 2010).

Between 2002 and 2007, Fidesz lost the elections twice to the left-wing Hungarian Socialist Party Alliance of Free Democrats (MSZP-SZDSZ). During the 2002 elections, the left-wing parties used the memorandum with the Romanian government as an electoral campaign

topic. They warned the Hungarians that because of the deal with Romania, up to 23 million Romanians could enter the Hungarian labour market; an increased fear of mass immigration helped the left-wing parties to win the elections (Szelényi, 2019; Waterbury, 2010).

For Fidesz the loss of the 2002 elections came rather unexpected; the close outcome of the second-round elections made it even harder to swallow. This led to anger and a search for new political strategies. In 2004, despite losing the elections, Fidesz organized a referendum on granting dual citizenship to ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring countries; it failed to pass because of a low turn-out. Due to the referendum the relationship with kin-state communities was back on the political agenda (Szelényi, 2019; Waterbury, 2010).

### MSZP-SZDSZ Government

The left-leaning government reshaped the kin-state policies by categorizing kin-state matters as economic development policies. It wasn't easy for the MSZP-SZDSZ government to reform the kin-state policies; after winning the elections, in 2003, the new government amended the status law and got rid of all references to an unified Hungarian nation beyond its borders (Pogonyi, 2017; Waterbury, 2010). The most critical issue was that the existing structure of providing financial support was very corrupt and therefore ineffective. The financing system created an unhealthy dependence on Hungary and hindered any reform; seeing reform as a threat to the financial funding, the former Hungarian territories accepted this comfort of dependence (Törzsök, 2004). The MSZP-SZDSZ government tried to move the kin-state policies in the direction of a more transparent and centralized funding process. The first step in this process was the creation of a new funding body, Szülőföld Alap (Homeland Fund). This fund would become the new institution for competitive funding applications from the kin-state communities. The fund was meant for three main themes: (1) education and job training; (2) culture and religion; and (3) local government, media, and information (Szulofold Law II, 2005). According to the Hungarian government, the Homeland Fund would be an institution creating cooperation between the Hungarian organizations abroad and the Hungarian government, characterized by accountability, transparency and EU conformity (The Government of Hungary, 2005).

After the MSZP-SZDSZ coalition once more won the elections in 2006, it continued its reform of the kin-state policies. Key elements of the new kin-state policy were economic development, modernization and increased competitiveness of ethnic Hungarian communities and the entire region. Where the previous Fidesz government (1998-2002) had given diaspora leaders increased access to the Hungarian policymaking process, the MSZP-SZDSZ government limited their role. Another significant change was that slogans of a unified Hungarian nation were no longer used. The government stated that Hungary would acknowledge the unique challenges and various circumstances of each individual kin-state community (Törzsök, 2004). By centralizing the funding and policymaking processes, while at



the same time looking at the kin-state communities individually, both sides would get more room for manoeuvre. There was no longer a one-size-fits-all approach, resulting in better opportunities for kin-state communities to create their own institutions and independently discuss particular issues with their own governments (Gémesi, 2007).

Nevertheless, since the 2006 elections a growing number of scandals in Hungary had come to light. In combination with a strengthening of radical right-wing parties and frustration over the economic development in the region, it resulted in more political polarization and sensitive regional tensions. Against this background, the sitting government was strongly criticized for the policy changes it had initiated. A main point of critique was how ineffective and unrealistic the economic development plan was. The state had not enough resources to fulfil all of its promises of regional development. Another point of concern was the anticipated improvement of the relationship with the neighbouring countries. For example, between 2006 and 2009 the tensions between Slovakia and Hungary increased, caused by nationalistic remarks by a member of the Slovak government which effectively blocked a visit of the Hungarian president. According to the critics, this showed that the Hungarian government naively expected that common business interests would positively reshape diplomatic relations between the neighbouring countries. A third concern was that the MSZP-SZDSZ government overlooked the crucial issue of identity building (mainly through language) in kin-state communities. According to activists and some analysts, the government had gone too far in dismantling the existing cross-border networks and cultural, educational and economic systems throughout the kin-state regions. It also didn't help that both Hungary and its neighbours were confronted with increased radicalism, making it more difficult to deal with minority right issues. (Waterbury, 2010)

### Another Change in Kin-State Politics: from 2010 until now

The big winner of the 2010 elections was the political party of Viktor Orbán, Fidesz; the party gained 50 percent of the votes. It was a turning point in Hungarian politics and it would also change Hungarian kin-state policies (Waterbury, 2010). Pogonyi (2017) argues that the Hungarian government used the kin-state policies for its own domestic strategic purposes. By using a right-wing, more nationalistic tactic, Fidesz had won the elections, discrediting the left and liberal parties, at the same time outflanking the emerging far-right Jobbik party. Nationalism became the main focus of all government policies. Orbán called it a 'freedom fight' against 'colonizing' foreign powers, including the European Union, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), multinational companies and foreign investors. Orbán wanted to strengthen Hungary's national sovereignty and improve its economy by reducing the unfair extra profits made by multinational companies. Hungary's national pride also had to be reshaped, for instance by the renaming of streets, building new monuments and statues, and rewriting history books with a more nationalistic focus. The clearest and fastest transformation of the new nationalistic policies was already completed within a week; the



adoption of the 2010 Hungarian Nationality Act. According to this law, non-residents of Hungarian ancestry can apply for Hungarian nationality, if they have a basic knowledge of the Hungarian language and proof of ancestors that lived in (former) Hungary. The subsequent Act on the Election of Members of the Parliament of Hungary, adopted late 2011, gives active and passive voting rights to Hungarians living outside the state borders. The government referred to it as 'national reunification beyond the borders', specifically arguing that the primary aim of the government and the new law was to redress past injustices suffered by Hungarians who had lost their citizenship after the Treaty of Trianon. The government argued that it was its moral duty to help Hungarians living outside the country, even if this would lead to tense relationships with neighbouring states (Pogonyi, 2017). The Deputy Prime Minister, Semjén, added that ethnic citizenship would also stop the assimilation of trans-border kin-minorities into the majorities of the countries of residence (Index.hu, 2010).

In addition to the citizenship issue, the Hungarian government also pursued other kin-state policies. It set up various state offices and kin-state institutions to strengthen national ties across borders. The government drafted a key diaspora policy document, with the main aim of helping Hungarians outside the country in maintaining their cultural heritage. The document specifically states that the outreach to Hungarians abroad is intended to secure the very survival of the nation. The government also states it will provide political, moral, and financial support for Hungarian institutions and organizations beyond its borders. The document lists three main threats: intermarriage, assimilation, and a decrease of Hungarian populations in neighbouring states. In response, the government argues that reproduction of Hungarian traditions and heritage is needed to boost national pride. Hungarian kin-communities are important in their contribution to the Hungarian culture. According to the Hungarian government, the borders of the nation stretch as far as the influence of the national institutions that help in maintaining the national identity (The Hungarian Government, 2015).

To implement and coordinate the funding of external cultural and educational programs, the government has established two separate funds, the Bethlen Gábor Fund and the Bethlen Gábor Fund Management Private Limited Non-Profit Company, respectively. The Bethlen Gábor Fund coordinates the Homeland (Szülőföld) educational aid program, securing financial aid to Hungarian children studying in Hungarian language schools in neighbouring states; it also provides grants to local governments and organizations for maintaining the Hungarian language and culture abroad. The government also initiated new educational and cultural projects, such as the Without Borders (Határtalanul) high school exchange program, meant for Hungarians high school students in neighbouring states so that they can go on study trips to familiarise themselves with the Hungarian history and culture as a sign of solidarity with the Hungarian nation beyond the borders (Pogonyi, 2017).

The Hungarian government supports other diaspora programs and associations as well. The most well-known programs and associations are Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program, Sándor Petőfi Program, Mikes Kelemen Program, Balassi Institute, and the Rákóczi Association. The Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program was launched in 2013, the first large-scale government initiative aimed at the diaspora. Through this program Hungarian youth can visit Hungarian communities abroad to strengthen their attachment to Hungary by community-building activities. For young Hungarians it is also a good learning experience, because they get to know the Hungarian diaspora better, and see what challenges they face abroad. A budget of 500 million Hungarian forint (1.4 million euro) is available for this program. Sándor Petőfi Program is directed at Hungarians in Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina; a Hungarian House has been opened in Sarajevo and a website has been initiated ([www.petofiprgram.hu](http://www.petofiprgram.hu)). For this program 350 million Hungarian forint (1 million euro) is available. The Mikes Kelemen program focuses on the archival heritage that has survived in the diaspora. All over the world many Hungarian documents are being collected. The main focus of the Balassi Institute (2016) is on the preservation of the identity of the living Hungarians and the development of education. The Rákóczi Association was already founded in 1994, and from 2016 on the Hungarian government has funded its diaspora program. This program provides an opportunity for Hungarian youngsters to take part in a study trip to Hungary (Prime Minister national policy, 2016).

These various funds and policies have proven to be of great advantage during Fidesz' 2014 election campaign; Fidesz owned the trans-border engagement and the inclusion of kin-minorities, while the kin-minorities saw the non-resident citizenship as a gift from Fidesz, more specifically as a gift from Orbán. Fidesz constantly reminded the kin-communities that they received the citizenship and all other benefits from Viktor Orbán personally. Fidesz also had a great influence in trans-border ethnic political parties, partly through the networks that Orbán had initiated as early as 2002. In 2014 Orbán used this trans-border network to mobilize voters. On top, Orbán sent out letters to all Hungarians living abroad, once more increasing the visibility of the party. The same goes for the campaign ads published in leading local media outlets, while Fidesz also enjoyed the backing of the state-run television channels and radio stations (Pogonyi, 2017). In its report on the elections, the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) concluded that the public media had not provided a balanced, equal access for all parties; there was a significant bias towards Fidesz in the average news coverage (OSCE, 2014). Most trans-border voters had access to Hungarian news, mostly through pro-government outlets. Although Hungarians in Transcarpathia are allowed to establish and maintain their own minority language media, most Hungarians in Transcarpathia actually watch the Hungarian state television. The TV channel does pay attention to Hungarians living in the former Hungarian territories, for instance by providing a weather forecast for pre-Trianon Hungarian territory (see figure 3).



Figure 3: Screenshot of the weather forecast of 01.04.2020 of the most watched national television channel, M1, they provide the weather forecast for all Hungarians, including the lost territories.

### Non-Resident Citizenship

By 2014, about 550,000 ‘foreign’ Hungarians had already received a non-resident Hungarian citizenship (Pogonyi, 2017). It is important to note that not all of the ethnic Hungarians who received a non-resident citizenship live in the former Hungarian territories. Most applicants are from the United States, Australia, Israel, Germany, Canada and South American countries (Prime Minister national policy, 2016). Of the 550,000 people who received a non-resident Hungarian citizenship, 195,338 had registered to vote (Pogonyi, 2017). Non-residents can only vote by letter, and only vote for a party list, not for individual candidates. In 2014, 128,712 people actually voted (Prime Minister national policy, 2016). Non-resident Hungarians helped the Fidesz government to gain a two-thirds majority, giving the Orbán government the chance to rewrite the constitution. Actually, Fidesz received more than 95 percent of the non-resident votes (Pogonyi, 2017). Extending citizenship to external kin groups is obviously a very important way of influencing electoral outcomes. External citizens with voting rights may determine the results of elections, without actually bearing the cost of political decisions (Pogonyi, 2017).

The political program of Fidesz, supported by an overwhelming majority of non-resident voters, focused on Christianity and nationality, depicting Hungary as a brave but lonely Christian nation, always under pressure from foreign powers. It still revolves around the (shameful) Treaty of Trianon. Contemporary Hungary is strongly characterized by nationalistic feelings; there is no place for refugees and migrants. To some extent, this is contradictory. Hungary only became an ethnic and religious homogeneous nation state, as a result of the Treaty of Trianon. Before the redrawing of its borders, ethnic Hungarians were only a minority (41.6 percent) within their own state; a fact never mentioned by prime minister Orbán (Van de Wijdeven, 2018; Lendvai, 2003; Pogonyi, 2017).

The changed voting rights also reconfigure inter- and intra-ethnic relations; they impact upon the claim-making potential of kin-minorities and their relations to the homeland. Because of the voting rights, minority politics has become an increasingly important topic, and political parties in Hungary will try to solicit the minorities' support by making promises that have to be financed by public revenues paid by the citizens living in Hungary. This may lead to tensions between the resident citizens and non-resident citizens, but also among the diaspora organizations and political parties, as homeland parties try to strengthen their influence in the kin-communities (Pogonyi, 2017). Pogonyi (2017) argues that such clientelism might even weaken the trans-border minorities by creating or deepening cleavages along the lines of Hungarian party politics (Pogonyi, 2017). In 2014 Fidesz allocated four seats on its list for representatives from the kin-communities in Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine, respectively, all associated with a pro-Fidesz ethnic party. These politicians were however nominated by Fidesz and elected by Hungarian voters rather than the respective Hungarian trans-border communities (Pogonyi, 2017).

In 2016 already more than 780,000 Hungarians living abroad acquired a non-resident citizenship. The neighbouring countries were not very enthused about the new citizenship law, to say the least. After Hungary introduced its ethnic citizenship law, Slovakia in turn made a new law banning dual citizenship; Slovak citizens acquiring Hungarian citizenship could be deprived of their Slovak citizenship, losing their public health insurance, and driver's license. Nevertheless, the Hungarian state encouraged ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia to apply for Hungarian citizenship, assuring the ethnic Hungarians that it would not share the list of people who had applied for or received Hungarian citizenship, suggesting that Slovak citizens could keep their Hungarian dual citizenship a secret (Pogonyi, 2017). In Slovakia about 1,400 Slovak individuals had lost their Slovak citizenship because of receiving the Hungarian citizenship. It is, however, interesting to note that only a minority of the people who had double nationalities, were Hungarians. The others received a German, Austrian or a United Kingdom citizenship, showing that the Slovak policies not only harm Hungarians but also other emigres in the country (Pogonyi, 2017). The new prime minister of Slovakia, Fico, suggested that Hungarians that lived in Slovakia could keep their dual citizenship if they were to settle in Hungary. Orbán reacted negatively, however, by responding that Hungary "cannot tolerate that Hungarians be deprived of their citizenship by a country of which they are residents" (Orbán, 2011). It is important to note here that both countries are in line with European citizenships norms. Within the EU, every member state can determine the requirements for naturalization and it may also set the conditions for a loss of citizenship, as long as it does not result in statelessness or loss of EU citizenship (Pogonyi, 2017). The Ukrainian authorities in Transcarpathia were also not happy with the developments regarding dual citizenship. The Ukrainian secret services investigated ethnic Hungarians who applied for Hungarian citizenship. They questioned them, so as to determine if they could be deprived of their Ukrainian citizenship. Also in this case Hungary reacted with the promise to

the ethnic Hungarians that it would remain confidential who had applied for or obtained Hungarian citizenship. The other neighbouring countries remained silent and had (almost) no criticism, even Romania that had so strongly criticised the 2001 Status Law (Pogonyi, 2017).

What are the advantages of non-resident citizenship, apart from voting rights? To start with, it is most beneficial for ethnic Hungarians living in non-EU countries as Serbia and Ukraine, because the Hungarian citizenship gives them long-term access to the EU labour market. For citizens already living in EU countries, the Hungarian citizenship is most likely more symbolic. The initial aim of granting citizenship to ethnic Hungarians abroad was that the inclusion of the ethnic Hungarians would strengthen national reunification and that it would facilitate the survival and development of the Hungarian kin-communities. It is, however, very questionable if citizenship will lead to the survival of the kin-communities. As Pogonyi (2017) states, easier access to Hungary and the European Union may lead to increased migration from the less developed regions in the neighbouring countries to Hungary and especially to other EU states. According to OECD estimates, already one million Hungarians have moved to other countries in Europe, temporarily or permanently in the last 10 years (OECD, 2019). This is in stark contrast with the goals of the Hungarian government, which had hoped that by providing citizenship the assimilation of the trans-border Hungarian communities could be slowed down or at least that ethnic Hungarians would move to Hungary (Pogonyi, 2017). So as to get the Hungarian youth from abroad back home, in 2015-2016 the Hungarian government launched a National Public non-profit program, to support the repatriation of Hungarian youth, employed in the United Kingdom. The program offered assistance to finding a job in Hungary. Within a year, hundreds of young people moved back home and signed an employment contract (Prime Ministers National Policy, 2016).

### Kin-State Policies and Citizenship Laws of Other Countries in CEE

Other Central and Eastern European countries are also faced with massive migration numbers, some of them also with shifting geographical borders over the last century. Numerous groups of ethnic communities in Central and Eastern Europe live close to their kin-state. Romania and Slovakia, for example, have several ethnic communities living in neighbouring countries. Hungary is also not the only state in Europe granting citizenship to non-residents. Even some other EU member states, such as Spain, Sweden, France and Germany, grant citizenship to non-residents. According to the 1997 European Convention on Nationality, each state can, under its own law, determine who its nationals; each state is free to decide which consequence it attaches when a national citizen acquires or possesses another nationality. Croatia for example adopted a citizenship law in 1993, granting citizenship rights to ethnic Croats abroad, four million, which is almost the same number as their population of four and a half million people. Ethnic Croats living outside Croatia, just like ethnic Hungarians, are allowed to vote in general elections in Croatia. Romania adopted a law for ethnic Romanians in 1998, primarily to grant free higher education in



Romania for ethnic Romanians living abroad. Ethnic Romanians who live abroad are allowed to vote in the parliamentary elections. From 2003 on it is possible to grant citizenship, regardless of residence or repatriation to those ethnic Romanians that have involuntarily lost their citizenship before 1989 (Csergo, 2005).

In 1996, Slovenia in turn adopted a law that defined Slovenians in Slovenia together with Slovene communities living outside the state as belonging to a common Slovene cultural zone; state subsidies are provided to foster interactions with Slovenian people living in this cultural zone. Another example of kin-state politics in other country is Slovakia. The Slovakia parliament adopted a law in 1997 offering educational, transportation and employment benefits to Slovaks living abroad. Residency in Slovakia was also made easier for ethnic Slovaks, so that they could return more easily if they wanted to.

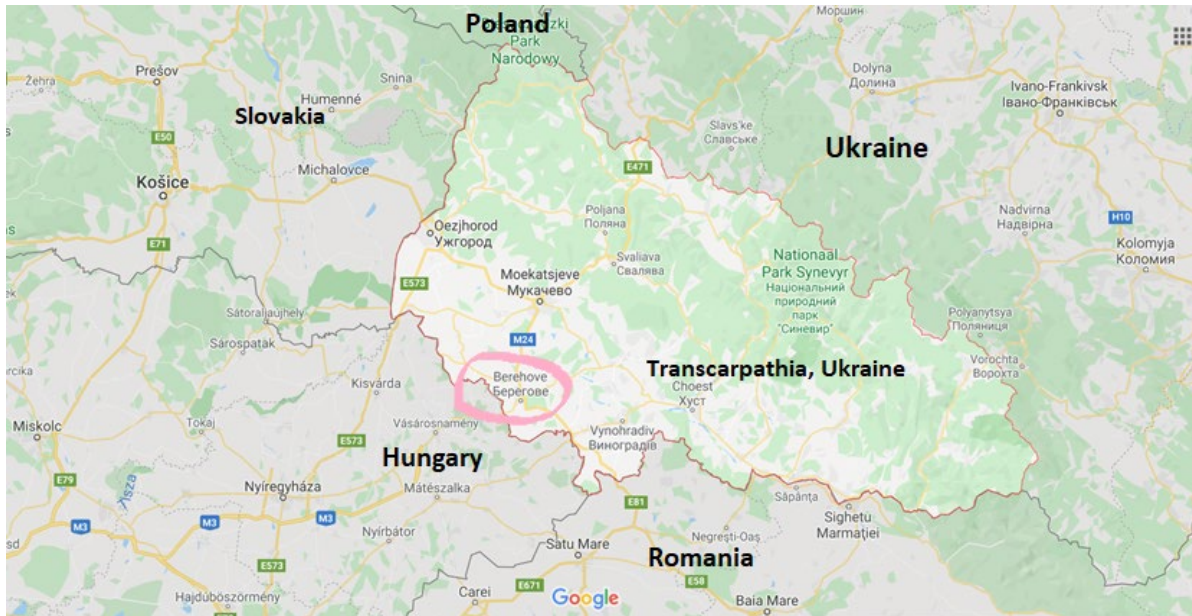
Croatia and Slovenia have accepted the policies by other kin-states towards minorities within their territories, while pursuing their own kin-state policies in neighbouring countries as well. It is interesting that other countries pursue kin-state politics as well, while some of them contest similar policies by other states toward their minorities (Csergo, 2005). As mentioned before between Slovakia and Hungary tensions are felt due to the kin-state policies of Hungary.

## Conclusion

So kin-state policymaking is mainly driven by the desire of a kin-state to secure and control access to the resources of the external population and its territory. These resources are economic, cultural and political in nature. Kin-state policies often include three main goals: strengthening co-ethnic communities abroad, promoting cross-border interaction, and enabling co-ethnics to move to the kin-state. In the next chapter these three resources and three main goals of kin-state policies are taken into consideration, to see which resources and goals are mainly reached/influenced/controlled by the Hungarian government. The field research focused on the consequences of the Hungarian kin policies for ethnic Hungarians living in Transcarpathia, but also whether non-Hungarians are influenced by this Hungarian policy. The implementation of these kin-state policies might lead to tensions and potential conflict, both domestically and between states. Neighbouring states might worry about their sovereignty and their own nation-building projects. This is part of the following analysis as well, since any chance of tensions is not good for a country's development, and especially not for Ukraine that already has its problems with Russia. It could be also the case, however, that, seen from a West-European perspective, kin-state policies look far more conflict-sensitive than they are in reality. We don't share the same history, so we are not feeling the same (Trianon) trauma. It is therefore interesting to find out whether the people in Berehove feel any possible conflicts, or that it is just an outsiders' perspective.

## Chapter 4 – Berehove, Transcarpathia

In the previous two chapters the concepts of '(national) identity' and 'kin-state politics and policies' of Hungary have been elaborated. This chapter combines these two concepts with the findings of the field research in Berehove, Ukraine (see map 3).



Map 3 : Screenshot of Google Maps. Berehove is circled.

### Berehove and Transcarpathia in Context

Transcarpathia (Zakarpattia in Ukrainian) is a region of 12,800 square kilometres on the western side of the Carpathian Mountains. Due to shifting borders in the past, after the collapse of the Soviet Union thirty years ago, this region became part of independent Ukraine. As described previously, over a century ago this region used to belong to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. In the Treaty of Trianon Hungary lost a lot of territory along its borders to Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, and Ukraine. Of all former Hungarian territories, Ukraine has the smallest Hungarian diaspora – around 150,000 people – and almost all of them live in the region of Transcarpathia, close to the Hungarian border (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2004). It is a relatively small Hungarian community, compared to, for instance, the 1.2 million Hungarians living in Romania (Jászberényi, 2019). The size of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine is also very small considering the entire population of Ukraine; Hungarians only constitute 0.24 percent of the country's 48 million population. Transcarpathia has a total population of 1.25 million, being 2.6 percent of the Ukrainian population (Iwanski & Zochowski, 2015). According to the 2001 census, the percentage of Hungarians in Transcarpathia was 12.1 (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2004). These figures are quite likely no longer accurate, given that the most recent census dates back to 2001. However, in 2017 research has been done by the Institute of Geography of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Research Institute for Hungarian



Communities Abroad; according to their figures, the size of the Hungarian population in Transcarpathia decreased from 152,000 to 131,000, mainly because of migration (Jászberényi, 2019).

Other minorities in the region are Romanian, Russian and Roma people; there are, however, no exact recent numbers of the other minority populations in Transcarpathia. According to the 2001 census, 2.6 % of the population in Transcarpathia consisted of Romanians and 2.5% of Russians living in Transcarpathia. In addition, more than a hundred nationalities and ethnic groups are living in the region, mainly Roma, Slovaks, Poles, and Germans. According to the census, 14,000 Roma live in Transcarpathia (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2004). Since many Roma have no valid passport and many didn't take part in the census, the actual numbers might be (much) higher. Jordan (2013) gives an unofficial number of 40,000 Roma, being the largest Roma population in Ukraine. Interesting to note is that most Roma people speak Hungarian; the largest Roma 'settlement' is located near the town of Berehove. I could not, however, visit this place, given the tensions in the camp during the time I was in Berehove. Later in this chapter, I will elaborate more on the Roma topic.

Transcarpathia is one of Ukraine's poorest regions. In 2013 it generated only 1.4 percent of Ukraine's GDP. The average monthly income in Transcarpathia is 210 euros, substantially lower than the average income of 350 euros. There are very few opportunities to get a well-paid job (Melkozerova, 2018). Many people have to have two jobs, just to be able to pay for their fixed costs. More often than not young people are also helping their grandparents financially, because of the very low pensions in Ukraine (Personal Communication, June 2019). In all senses, Transcarpathia is an economic periphery, with the main income originating from border activities and agricultural industry, especially the processing of fruits and vegetables. In 2001, 63.3 percent of the people in Transcarpathia lived in rural areas (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2004). There is a small tourist sector – the region is well-known for its mineral water springs and mountain ranges – which nowadays is becoming more important for the local economy (Iwanski & Zochowski, 2015).

Berehove is the place where I conducted most of the interviews and all observations. This town was chosen because of the Hungarian College and the contacts of the Hungarian Academy of Science in Budapest where I conducted my internship. According to the 2001 census, Berehove had a population of 27,200 (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2004). Berehove is the most Hungarian town of Ukraine, since Hungarians constitute 48 percent of the inhabitants, outnumbering Ukrainians, who make up 39 percent of the population (Melkozerova, 2018). More recent figures state that the share of the Hungarian population in the city has shrunk to 40 percent in 2018 (Jászberényi, 2019). Because of the mixed population, in the streets and shops you hear various languages being spoken. Hungarian is still widely used, although it has been more than a century that the region was part of Hungary.

That Hungary lost regions a century ago is certainly not forgotten in Hungary. On March 15, 2020 – a national holiday in Hungary (see figure 4)– in a message to the Hungarians living in Transcarpathia, Prime Minister Orbán noted that exactly a century ago Hungary lost a significant part of its territory. He continued: *“also today Hungary cannot exist without the Hungarian communities of Transylvania, Vojvodina, Upper Hungary and Transcarpathia; therefore, strengthening and protecting their rights is our joint mission and responsibility, we solemnly swear that we will preserve – and enhance for the benefit of all our communities – the unique linguistic, spiritual and cultural heritage that we have created in the Carpathian Basin over a period of more than one thousand years”* (Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister, 2020).

Even a century later, the trauma of Trianon is still felt. Orbán clearly uses this historical event for identity politics, to promote the Hungarian identity even stronger. On the occasion of almost every national holiday the Treaty of Trianon is brought up. Focusing on Trianon can have a binding function, it can create a feeling of a shared identity, a feeling of belonging. As said, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) refer to this as ‘groupness’. Identity is used in every-day life, but in a political context it is primarily used to convince people of the government’s policies.

According to Smith (1991; see Chapter 2), there are five fundamental features of national identity: (1) A historic territory or homeland; (2) Common myths and historical memories; (3) A common, mass public culture; (4) Common legal rights and duties for all members; and (5) A common economy with territorial mobility for its members. The question is now whether these five features are present among the Hungarian people living in Transcarpathia. However, is it fair to make such a clear distinction between the respective identities and ethnic versus non-ethnic Hungarians? In Chapter 2 it has already been pointed out that identity politics tends to ignore that different identities might mix or overlap. People who have a particular ethnic identity but are living in another nation can also be part of that



Figure 4: National Holiday of March 15 (2019) when Hungary commemorates the day in 1848, the start of the revolution. Translation of *A haza minden előtt*: Home before everything/anything else.

other nation's identity, a notion of intra-group diversity that is often ignored within the identity debate. In other words, Hungarians in Transcarpathia may feel that they belong to the Hungarian nation but to the Ukrainian nation as well. And one step further, even non-ethnic Hungarians may feel part of a shared identity as well. Or as a person in Berehove said: *"We are all Transcarpathian, and not only Hungarian or Ukrainian"* (Street talk 3, personal communication, June 2019). I often heard statements like this; it goes to show that it is not easy to label people to a specific nation or country. Almost all people I spoke to said that they were either Transcarpathian, Transcarpathian Ukrainian or Transcarpathian Hungarian. It was an exception if someone said I am a Hungarian or I am a Ukrainian (Street talk 3, personal communication, June 2019). People in Transcarpathia state to be part of an intragroup, part of more than one identity; in other words, a combination of Smith's (1991) Western and non-Western model. According to the Western model, a person can choose to which national identity he or she belongs, while the non-Western model states that the place of birth determines to which identity a person belongs (Smith, 1991). Having the Transcarpathian identity then refers to the non-Western model. By adding Hungarian or Ukrainian is, however, a more personal feeling of belonging to the Hungarian or Ukrainian nation. The following vignette shows how identity is not a black-vs-white issue.

### **Vignette**

#### **Sitting on a bench in Berehove**

*It is 25 degrees Celsius and I am sitting on a wooden bench in the main street of Berehove. An older man approaches and says something in Ukrainian to me. I reply in Hungarian: 'Sorry, I don't speak Ukrainian.' The man replies: 'Then we'll speak Hungarian! Can I sit next to you?' I answer: 'Of course'. We are sitting in silence and after a few minutes I ask if I can pose a question. The man nods. 'Are you Hungarian or Ukrainian?' The man looks at me quite sceptical and replies: 'I am a Transcarpathian, I don't believe in labels. In this region we always lived in peace with each other. If you would look at my family tree, only than you would see that I'm Hungarian, I feel Hungarian as well. But I am a different Hungarian than a Hungarian who is living in Budapest or Sopron, I am a Hungarian Transcarpathian and a Ukrainian Transcarpathian, so, basically, I am a Transcarpathian. I married a Ukrainian Transcarpathian, we both speak both languages, Hungarian and Ukrainian, that's who we are, we are both. Sadly, I have to go already, my wife is waiting for me at the market, but I wanted to rest a bit before I had to carry all the groceries.' He laughs, stands up and says: 'Enjoy the view of the most beautiful street in Ukraine, where people with all different backgrounds live peacefully with each other because they are all Transcarpathian.'* (Personal communication, June 2019)

This Transcarpathian feeling has an effect on the time zone in Berehove as well. Is the time zone more Ukrainian or more Hungarian (a time difference of one hour)? People in Berehove are living and working according to the official Hungarian time zone, although not officially. For people who are not aware of this, it is quite confusing. And to make it even more confusing, appointments at Ukrainian official institutions are registered for the Ukrainian

time zone, whereas the students and teachers of the Hungarian College live and work according to the Hungarian time zone. My mobile phone automatically adjusted to the Ukrainian time, while inside the Hungarian College, where I spend most of my time, the Hungarian time zone was used. When I asked people in the street what time it was, they often gave the Hungarian time (probably because I asked it in Hungarian), although sometimes they gave two times. Using this Hungarian time zone can be seen as a form of identification, a symbolic representation of the Hungarian identity. When I asked why most people in Berehove use the Hungarian time zone, the answers were: *“It is easier because we travel so much back and forth between Hungary and Transcarpathia”* and *“we are more connected with Hungary than Ukraine, so it’s easier for us to adjust to the Hungarian time zone”* (Street talk 1, personal communication, June 2019). These answers show that the Hungarian time zone is used for functional benefits but also for their symbolic representation of their Hungarian identity. Another symbolic representation of identity can be religion.

## Religion

Christianity is an essential part of contemporary Hungarian politics and also an important part of the national identity. Christian values, or as Walker (2019) argues, a specific interpretation of them, have become the centrepiece of the messages of the Hungarian government. Every month, Orbán hosts Christian delegations from all over the world, and in 2020, for the second time, a conference on the persecution of Christians has been organized. Orbán stated during the conference: *“Here, a thousand years ago, there was the birth of a special Christian cast of mind, and a special Hungarian Christian state. Over the past one thousand years there were times when we left this path, but we always found our way back eventually. This is why the Hungarian Constitution states: ‘We recognise the role of Christianity in preserving nationhood.’ [...] The Hungarian people and the Hungarian government believe that Christian virtues can lead those who exercise them to peace and happiness. This is why our Constitution states that ‘The protection of the constitutional identity and Christian culture of Hungary shall be an obligation of every organ of the State.’”* (Miniszterelnök, 2019)

Research shows that in 2015-16 78 percent of the Hungarians identified themselves as Christians, although only one out of ten attends church once a week (PEW Research Center, 2017). In Transcarpathia I noticed that most of the Hungarians saw themselves as Christians, practicing and non-practicing. In his speech for Hungarians beyond the border, Orbán stated that assistance has to be taken directly to communities, by contacting local church leaders. The Hungarian Church in Romania has received more than 130 million euros from the Hungarian government, half of which has been spent on renovating and upgrading churches, community buildings and other properties belonging to the church (Keller-Alant, 2020). Although exact information regarding the funding for the church in Berehove is not available, it is widely known that the church does get financial aid and donations of equipment from the Hungarian government. All people I spoke to, take this for granted; it is, after all, the Hungarian church, so why wouldn’t Hungary support it. Not only the Reformed

Church gets help, the Catholic Church as well. One interviewee told me: *“Orbán protects the region from becoming a Muslim region. I am grateful that Orbán, as one of the only leaders in Europe, sees the problem that we are facing with all the migrants coming and destroying our Christian identity”* (Street talk 4, personal communication, June 5, 2019). The fear of Muslim migrants was a returning topic. This can obviously be led back to the media propaganda of the Hungarian government, going on for several years now, in which migrants are the main news topic. As stated before in chapter 3 Hungarians in Transcarpathia are able to watch some Hungarian TV channels, mainly those channels that are supported/bought by the Hungarian state. By watching the continuous TV footage on Muslim migrants, even people in Transcarpathia are getting afraid, although no migrants are passing the Hungarian-Ukrainian border because they are not longing to go to one of the poorest regions in Europe. The following vignette refers to a person in Transcarpathia who is happy with the Christian discourse of Orbán. (Keep in mind, however, that 67 percent in Hungary agrees with the statement that religion should be kept separate from government policies (PEW Research center, 2017)).

### **Vignette**

#### **Sitting on a bench in Berehove, part two**

*After lunch I decided to go outside and enjoy the nice weather. After a ten minutes' walk I see a woman of around 50 years old sitting on a bench and I decide to sit next to her. I greet her in Hungarian. The woman greets back and gives me a polite smile. I say, 'it is nice weather isn't it?' The woman nods. After a while she asks where I came from because of my accent. I tell her and we start talking about the differences between Ukraine and the Netherlands and about my thesis topic as well. I ask her what she thinks about Viktor Orbán. She hesitates but answers: 'I think it is good that finally someone is paying attention to this region. I know Orbán is using our votes for his own advantage, but at least we are benefiting from his support. Ukraine doesn't support this region, you already saw probably how bad the roads are, so everyone is glad with every support that we receive. People with a non-Hungarian background are also happy with the support of Orbán. And Orbán fights for the right Christian values as well; I like that, I am a Christian. He is protecting us from the Muslims who are coming into Europe'. (Personal communication, June 2019)*

### **Language and Place**

Language is next to religion also an important element of a feeling of belonging to a group (Byram, 2006). Often, speaking a language shows a person's identity. In the streets of Berehove people spoke various languages and streets signs and ads were written in multiple languages (see figure 5). I heard the Russian language quite often as well, many of them were tourists (for the spa baths). The Ukrainian language is the state language, according to Art. 10 of the Constitution: *“The state language of Ukraine is the Ukrainian language. The State ensures the comprehensive development and functioning of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of social life throughout the entire territory of Ukraine. In Ukraine, the free development, use and protection of Russian, and other languages of national minorities of*



*Ukraine, is guaranteed. The State promotes the learning of languages of international communication. The use of languages in Ukraine is guaranteed by the Constitution of Ukraine and is determined by law (Constitution of Ukraine, 2019)."*

Nevertheless many people who live in Transcarpathia want to learn the Hungarian language. Including Ukrainian students who attend the Hungarian College of higher education, where the Hungarian language is the main language.

For this thesis, the place where I conducted most research was Berehove, more particular at the Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education. Before the Treaty of Trianon, the building where the college is located used to be a Royal Law House, while during the 1950s the building was turned into a military factory for producing navigation systems for intercontinental missiles (Talk with teacher, personal communication June 3, 2019). The Hungarian College functions as a symbolic representation of the Hungarian identity. The hallways of the college are decorated with Hungarian symbols, like the Hungarian national flag and various geographical maps. According to Holland et al. (1998), a school can be seen as a 'figured world' where teachers and students are constructing a place to preserve and cultivate the Hungarian identity within the larger space of Transcarpathia, Ukraine (Holland, et al., 1998). Looking around in the college, one definitely gets the idea that this is the case; one might easily think the college is located in Hungary, given all the Hungarian symbols throughout the building. Another form of identification is the Hungarian language that is being spoken within the building.



Figure 5: In Berehove all signs and ads are in two languages.

What kind of institution is this Hungarian College of higher education exactly? The website of the Hungarian College states:

Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education is a nationally recognized Ukrainian private higher education establishment of the 3rd accreditation level located in Transcarpathia, which was established by the Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association. The College has been operating since as early as 1996 aligned with and licensed by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Formerly, it was named Transcarpathian Hungarian Teacher Training College (KMTF) providing teacher education qualifications. In 2003 following structural and profile enhancements and taking up the name of Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education its aspirations extended through teacher education to a number of additional non-pedagogic specializations.

Currently, training is conducted at the full-time and extra-mural courses at the qualification levels of “junior specialist”, “bachelor”, “master”, as well as short-term, intensive and vocational courses in accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” [...] The College has not obtained any federal government funds from the state budget of Ukraine.

*The institution's expenses are largely covered with the support of Hungary, augmented through grant projects. Professional authorization and supervision over the educational activity of the institution is placed on the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Education at all qualification levels is carried out on a free-of-charge basis. Full-time students are eligible for scholarships in accordance with Ukrainian state standards. [...] As outlined in the Charter of Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education, the language of instruction is Ukrainian, Hungarian and English. The free choice of the language of instruction is aligned with paragraph 3 of Article 48 of the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”, which states that “... Ukraine's higher education establishments of a private form of ownership have the right to choose a language of instruction provided that the official language is taught as a separate discipline to all persons enrolled in such institutions”.* All students are offered an additional opportunity to study the Ukrainian language (as well as other languages including English, German, Hungarian, etc.) at courses organized by the College and are free for both students and teachers. Moreover, the possibility of optional study of Hungarian as a foreign language is provided for students whose mother tongue is Ukrainian, as well as the opportunity to participate in the summer academies of intensive study of the Hungarian language and culture at the University of Debrecen and Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest). As outlined by the agreements between the institutions, all programmes are free of charge. Students whose native language is Ukrainian enjoy the right to do tests, examination papers, coursework, bachelor's and master's theses in the language they choose independently (usually in Ukrainian, English or Hungarian) throughout the entire course of study. They also have the right to take examinations and tests in their native language. Also at practical, seminar or laboratory classes students are permitted to do assignments or reports in their native language. The following system of conducting classes is practised: if lectures are delivered in one language, then practical classes are held in the other, and vice versa. This system enhances students' deeper acquisition of the material, as well as mastery of the relevant terminology in the official, Hungarian or English languages. (Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education, nd)

In other words, the Hungarian College is a multilingual Higher Education Institute, where people can take classes in various languages. During the 2017/18 academic year, 1,210 students were enrolled. Some classes are taught in Ukrainian, which is necessary because many students can't speak Hungarian. There are, however, also teachers who don't speak proper Ukrainian and teach in Hungarian only. This can of course be problematic for the Ukrainians students.



One might ask why Ukrainian students want to go to a Hungarian school in the first place.

When asked, many answered that this College was for free, while Ukrainian schools, not as close by, were very expensive (with tuition fees comparable to Dutch universities). Many in Ukraine can't afford this, given that the average income is very low. The Hungarian College is free because it is funded by the Hungarian government. This is in line with the Hague Recommendations of the OSCE: *"Private minority language educational institutions are entitled to seek their own sources of funding without any hindrance or discrimination from the State budget, international sources and the private sector"* (OSCE, 10<sup>th</sup> recommendation, 1996). Hungarian funding also paid for the necessary renovation of the college building (see figure 7 and 8) (Talk with teacher, personal communication, June 2019).



Figure 6: Advertisement on the street in Berehove for the Hungarian College; *építsd a jövőd itthon!* means build your future here at home!



Figure 7 and 8: The Hungarian College is renovated with support of the Hungarian government.

The argument that Ukrainian students choose for a Hungarian College because no tuition fees are needed sounded very reasonable to me. The most surprising answer, however, to the question why Ukrainian students go to a Hungarian school, was that students want to learn the Hungarian language. The Ukrainian students want to learn the Hungarian language, because they might be eligible for Hungarian citizenship afterwards. So that after graduation they might go easily to Hungary or another EU country and earn their money by working abroad (the Hungarian average income is much higher, with 955 euros a month) (Melkozerova, 2018). As previously stated, according to an amendment to the Hungarian Nationality Act, non-residents of Hungarian ancestry can apply for Hungarian nationality but they should at least have a basic knowledge of the Hungarian language (Hungarian Consulate, 2018), besides having at least one (great)grandparent that used to live in the region that once belonged to Hungary. During the interviews, none of the students brought this issue up directly. It was quite noticeable that this was not the first thing they wanted to tell me; some even looked a bit ashamed. It is a sensitive topic, because in Ukraine it is officially not allowed to have two passports (Constitution of Ukraine, 2019). Only when I talked to some students individually in the streets, or asked random people about it, they explained why so many Ukrainian students were studying at the Hungarian College. There were also some Ukrainian students who wanted to learn the language in order to be able to apply for a scholarship for additional studies in Hungary. They consider it to be an investment in their future (getting the Hungarian passport would be a positive side-effect) (Interview with four first year students, personal communication, June 3 2019).

Some students at the Hungarian College couldn't answer me in Hungarian because they did not speak it well enough; understanding the language was easy, however, after four years of Hungarian education. A teacher at the College told me that about half of the students are now Ukrainians, even though many of them are not able to speak the Hungarian language or, at best, just very little (Talk with teacher, personal communication, June 2019). Some students I interviewed could only speak Hungarian, and a few students just spoke Russian since they originally came from eastern Ukraine. The students who didn't speak the Ukrainian language thought it was not strange: *"I don't need it"* (Talk with students on the street, personal communication, June 3 2019). This obviously leads to difficulties, but since many students are able to speak various languages, they help with the translations during class. A positive side-effect of being able to speak multiple languages is that it promotes tolerance, understanding, and even friendship among different ethnic groups (OSCE, 1996). Referring to the notion of 'othering' (Van Houtum, 2010), it is noteworthy that in the case of students of the Hungarian College, no difference is made between the various nationalities and ethnicities.

Other people (not being regular enrolled students) who want to learn the Hungarian language can attend a language course, provided by the Hungarian College in Berehove. The

Training and Consultation Center of the College offers five language courses: Ukrainian, Hungarian, English, German, and Russian. The language school for adults already opened in 2004, with multiple goals: learning a language for one's own interests, for language exams, for providing more chances on the job market, and for being able to speak the language in the mother country. The main goal, according to the language school, is providing and creating better opportunities for the participants in finding a job. Being able to speak more languages, and certainly the official language of the country, have more and more become a requirement for jobs inside and outside the country. During the last years Hungarian was the most requested language in the language school. Between 2016 and the first half of 2019, a total of 21,342 people took part in Hungarian language courses, 11,467 of them received a certificate after successfully finishing the course (Varadi, 2019; Personal Communication with Mrs. Varadi, June 3 2019). If Transcarpathian people want to find a job in Hungary it is really helpful, not to say necessary, to speak the Hungarian language.

The language school has different locations in Transcarpathia; in looking for locations the school pays special attention to the percentage of Hungarian people; it is even better when the location is historically important for Hungary. The main consideration is obviously to create an opportunity for teaching the Hungarian language in villages where ethnic Hungarians are living but where there is no Hungarian school. The language school is open to everyone. After successfully taking part, students receive a certificate from the Rákóczi Ferenc Hungarian College in two languages, Hungarian and Ukrainian. Like in the case of the Hungarian College, most participants of Hungarian language courses want to learn the Hungarian language so as to be eligible for Hungarian citizenship, although participants hardly admit that this is their main incentive (Mrs. Varadi, Personal Communication, June 3, 2019).

### Rákóczi Szövetség

Students of the Hungarian College and various other people pointed at Rákóczi Szövetség/ Association as the promoter of Hungarian schools and as the provider of many scholarships. The Rákóczi Association promotes Hungarian kindergartens and schools in pre-Trianon Hungarian territories. It was founded in 1989, with the specific aim of protecting the Hungarian culture, language, and communities with a special focus on the former Hungarian territories, but in general on the diaspora scattered around the world. Rákóczi Association focuses on the youth; in 2019 it reached almost 100,000 young people, through initiatives such as summer camps and student travel programs for Hungarian high school youth visiting other Hungarians on both sides of the border. The summer camps of the Rákóczi Association are best-known; during the summer of 2019, 17 summer camps were held with a total of 4,500 participants. Teachers are part of the summer camps, lecturing on the Hungarian identity, language and history (Rákóczi Szövetség website, n.d. and Rákóczi Association, personal communication, July 18, 2019).

Back in Budapest, I visited the association to find out what the motive is in promoting Hungarian schools and whether they are supported by the Hungarian government in this process.

The program that students in Berehove specifically had mentioned to me, is the *Magyar Iskolaválasztási program* [Hungarian school selecting program]. When this program started in 2004, parents received 10,000 Forint (approximately 30 euros) when their child went to a Hungarian primary school. This amount has not changed over the years; however, “*it is about the symbolic value, not the practical value*” (Rákóczi Association, personal communication, June 5, 2019). The Magyar Iskolaválasztási program was the first program to be implemented in the region. In 2018, with the help of this program, 7,000 children in neighbouring countries chose a Hungarian school. The project leader added: “*It is important to know that this does not happen with the help of government funding*” (Rákóczi Association, personal communication, July 18, 2019). Nevertheless, in the room where the interview took place, the logo of the Hungarian government is displayed twice, while on the website several statements can be found, stating that various ministries provide support to programs initiated for Hungarians living abroad (see figure 9). The same logos of the Hungarian government and various ministries are printed in the children’s books as well (in the books, and on the website, it says: *Megvalósult a Magyar Kormány támogatásával* [Established with support of the Hungarian Government]).



Figure 9: Screenshot of the website of the Rákóczi Szövetség with some of the partners of the association: the three seen are all from the Hungarian Government.

<https://www.rakocziszovetseg.org/>

On the website of the Rákóczi Association, one can find a partnership agreement with the Ministry of Human Capacities; the exact amounts of money involved are not mentioned. The books also display the logo of the Bethlen Gábor Fund, which coordinates the Homeland (Szülőföld) educational aid program, securing financial aid to Hungarian children studying in Hungarian language schools in neighbouring states, and providing grants to local governments and organizations in helping to maintain the Hungarian language and culture abroad (Pogonyi, 2017). This is obviously also one of the goals mentioned by Csergo (2005) in her analysis of kin-state activism: strengthening co-ethnic communities abroad in a social, cultural and/or economic way (Csergo, 2005).



Rákóczi Association strengthens the ethnic communities by promoting Hungarian schools so that the number of students will increase, culturally by promoting Hungarian language and culture, and economically by giving parents a (symbolic) financial gift when choosing a Hungarian school. This is clearly part of one of the policy tools addressed by Waterbury: the funding of external kin-community organizations and developing political, cultural and educational institutions in the kin-communities (Waterbury, 2010). Through this association, the Hungarian government is funding the Hungarian kin-community in Transcarpathia. By providing funds to the Rákóczi Association, the Hungarian government is able to promote Hungarian schools and institutions in Ukraine.

The association is not active in villages where only Hungarians live (as some villages in Romania for example), since all children of those villages do already visit a Hungarian school. This is not the case in Ukraine, however, where the communities are mainly mixed. For that reason, three specific programs of the Rákóczi Association are implemented in Transcarpathia: the *Gólyahir*, *Óvodai*, and *Magyar Iskolaválasztási program*.

As said, parents receive 10,000 Hungarian Forint (about 30 euros) when their child goes to a Hungarian primary school, as part of the *Magyar Iskolaválasztási program* [Selecting Hungarian school program]. They only receive the money when their child has already attended the Hungarian school for a couple of weeks or months. Representatives of the association visit the communities where the Hungarian schools are based and personally hand over the money to the parents. Over the last two years they also provided each child – Hungarian or non-Hungarian – that attends a Hungarian school, a high-quality school bag with a worth of about 60 euros (see figure 10). The use of large school bags is obligatory in Hungarian schools. They thank the students and their parents for their school choice, because by attending the Hungarian primary school the Hungarian language and culture is being passed on to the next generation. According to the association, this is “*the key for preserving the Hungarian identity*” (Rákóczi Association, personal communication, July 18, 2019).



Ezt a táskát a Rákóczi Szövetségtől kaptam, mert magyar iskolába járok! (Fotó: Pósa Homoly Erzső/Felvidék.ma)

Figure 10: Print screen of the website felvidék.ma  
Picture shows the schoolbags that kids are receiving when going to a Hungarian school. In the bag is written: My name\_\_\_\_ this bag I received from the Rákóczi Association because I am going to a Hungarian school.  
<https://felvidek.ma/2020/04/a-szeptemberi-iskolakezdo-k-szamithatnak-a-rakoczi-szovetsegtol-kapott-taskajukra/>

The association also pays attention to mixed families, where one of the parents is Hungarian; *“a schoolbag can be the trigger for choosing the Hungarian school”* (Rákóczi Association, personal communication, July 18, 2019). As mentioned before the school selecting program is used to counter the problem of decreasing numbers of pupils in Hungarian schools. Because of the program, the decrease was stopped, and in more and more schools the number of new students starts to rise again, albeit slowly. Primary school directors advised the association that it would be helpful if it already started to ‘recruit’ new Hungarian students even before they have to choose a primary school. That’s the reason why in 2012 the *Óvodai* [Kindergarten] program has been initiated. The association visits Hungarian kindergartens but also non-Hungarian kindergartens to advertise about the Hungarian schools. Local institutions provide the association with numbers of Hungarians attending (Hungarian) kindergartens. *“We receive the numbers of Hungarians so that we can send the gifts to the local partners, the local partners can then divide the presents saying that they receive it from the Rákóczi Szövetség”* (Rákóczi Association, personal communication, July 18, 2019). The presents are given at the end of the year, as a Christmas gift. Since 2018 the gift boxes contain a fairy-tale book, published by the Rákóczi Association, a letter from the association with 12 reasons why parents should choose a Hungarian school for their child (see below), and a Bosci (Hungarian trade) chocolate bar. The reason behind the fairy-tale book is to give something precious that looks nice on the shelf as well (Rákóczi Association, personal communication, July 18, 2019).

According to the Rákóczi Association, the kindergartens were very positive about the intentions of the association. They even proposed to start even earlier with promoting Hungarian education. In 2017 the Rákóczi Association therefore initiated the *Gólyahír Újszülött köszöntő* Program [Stork new-born greeting program], in an effort to reach as many new-born Hungarians and their parents as possible, by giving them a new-born book/ baby diary book: My First Book. This book, published by the association, not only contains the most important information about a child’s growth and development and provides space for personalized documentation, but the association also added Hungarian tales, poems and songs, including the Hungarian national anthem, so that the child can enjoy the Hungarian culture and Hungarian language from an early age on. As an employee of the Rákóczi Association added: *“this book functions as the most important basics for the Hungarian identity as well”* (Rákóczi Association, personal communication, July 18, 2019). And he added that the baby book should also be seen as a gesture of identity and a feeling of belonging (Rákóczi Association, personal communication, July 18, 2019).

The 12 reasons why parents should choose a Hungarian school for their child(ren) are as following;

1. *Örökség - Az évszázadokon át továbbadott magyar nyelv és kultúra olyan érték, amelyet megőrizni erkölcsi kötelesség.*

**Heritage** – It is a moral duty to preserve the valuable Hungarian language and culture which has been passed down over the centuries.

2. *Közösség - A magyar iskola a magyar közösség fennmaradásának záloga.*

**Community** – the key to the survival of the Hungarian community is the Hungarian school.

3. *Identitás – A magyar iskola kialakítja a gyermek biztos identitását, ami abban segíti, hogy a szűkebb és tágabb közösségében, így az egész Kárpát-medencében otthon érezze magát.*

**Identity** – The Hungarian school develops a secure identity for the child which helps him/her to feel at home in his/her small and larger community and in the whole Carpathian base as well.

4. *Kizárólagosság - A magyar nyelv és a magyar kultúra csak magyar iskolában sajátítható el.*

**Exclusiveness** - The Hungarian language and Hungarian culture can only be acquired in a Hungarian school.

5. *Érvényesülés – A magyar iskola nagyobb érvényesülést jelent, mert több tudást, több ismeretet nyújt, hiszen két nyelvet, két kultúrát tanít.*

**Justice** - The Hungarian school means greater prevalence, because it provides better understanding, and more knowledge as the child learns two languages and two cultures.

6. *Kulturális sokszínűség – A vegyes családban élő gyermek számára is a legjobb választás a magyar iskola, abban az esetben is, ha a szülő nem magyar iskolában tanult.*

**Cultural diversity** - The Hungarian school is also the best choice for a child living in a mixed family, even if the parent studied in a non-Hungarian school.

7. *Hatékonyság – Tudományosan bizonyított tény, hogy az ismeretek megszerzésének leghatékonyabb módja az anyanyelven történő tanulás.*

**Efficiency** – It is proven scientifically that the most effective way to acquire knowledge is to learn in the mother tongue.

8. *Versenyképesség – A magyar iskolák versenyképes tudást nyújtanak, mert jól felszereltek és felkészült pedagógusok várják a gyermekeket.*

**Competitiveness** - Hungarian schools provide competitive knowledge because well-equipped and trained teachers are waiting for the children.

9. *Lehetőség – A magyar iskolába járó gyermek számára könnyen elérhetővé válik a hazai mellett a magyarországi felsőoktatás, illetve a munkaerőpiac is.*

**Possibility** – The children attending the Hungarian school can not only access the domestic higher education, the Hungarian higher education and the Hungarian labour market will be more easy accessible as well.

10. *Támogatás – A magyar intézménybe járó diákok minden évben számíthatnak a magyar állam anyagi támogatására.*

**Aid/ Support** - Students attending a Hungarian institution can count on the financial support of the Hungarian state every year.



11. *Programok - A Rákóczi Szövetség Kárpát-medencei magyarságot megszólító programjai elérhetővé válnak a magyar iskolák diákjai számára.*

**Programmes** - The programs of the Rákóczi Association, addressed to Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, will be available to all students of Hungarian schools.

12 *Ajándék – A Rákóczi Szövetség minden magyar iskolába lépő gyermeknek felajánl egy jó minőségű iskolatáskát és a magyar összefogást jelképező ösztöndíjat.*

**Gift** - The Rákóczi Association offers every child entering a Hungarian primary school a high-quality school bag and a scholarship that symbolizes the Hungarian cooperation (Rákóczi Szövetség, nd).

These 12 arguments are clearly formulated to push the parents into the direction of selecting a Hungarian school instead of a Ukrainian one. It is noteworthy that in the first three arguments words like ‘*moral duty*’, ‘*key to survival*’, and ‘*securing of identity*’ are used. The main focus is on preserving the Hungarian identity, not on why Hungarian education as such would be better. According to the Rákóczi Association, the Hungarian schools have quite clearly become more popular, not just because of the Rákóczi Association, but also because more Ukrainian students applied for Hungarian schools after the adoption of the new Hungarian citizenship law. Needless to say, that in Hungarian schools the Hungarian national identity is clearly present in the schoolbooks and the curriculum. The identity of children and students is probably formed at school as well. When Ukrainian students attend a Hungarian school, they not only get acquainted to the Hungarian language, but with the Hungarian culture as well. In primary school, for example, they learn the Hungarian national anthem, Hungarian poems and Hungarian fairy tales. It is therefore not unlikely that (un)consciously their identity is being shaped more towards the Hungarian identity. If this is the case, the people in Berehove don’t see this as a problem. One person however noted that “*the child will have a more Hungarian-focused view of the world*” (Street talk 2, personal communication, June 4, 2019). The question is whether this is a problem or not.

The activities of the association are by no means illegal or forbidden, but it is somewhat controversial to promote schools that teach in another language than the state language. It might even lead to tensions, especially when an employee of the Rákóczi Association openly states: “*As Hungary we prefer to think as a nation and not in country borders*” (Rákóczi Association, personal communication, July 18, 2019). The pre-Trianon borders are very important for the Rákóczi Association. In 2020 a website was launched to commemorate 100 years of the Treaty of Trianon: <https://www.magyarvagyok2020.hu/> [“I am a Hungarian 2020”]. The (translated) heading of the website states: “*We survived 100 years after the Trianon decision. Trianon’s centenary is both mourning and joy. We mourn the loss, the fragmentation, but we have reason to rejoice, because despite the last 100 years, we have not disappeared from the map, we have not lost and we can look to the future with confidence*”(Rákóczi Association, 2020). This statement once again shows that the main focus of the association is to preserve the Hungarians in the lost areas. Preserving

Hungarians in former areas is done by the Hungarian government as well by providing non-residents Hungarian citizenships to ethnic Hungarians.

## Dual Citizenship

Most of the Hungarians living in Transcarpathia applied for the dual (Hungarian) citizenship. In 2015 the Hungarian authorities announced that they had given around 100,000 citizenships to ethnic Hungarians living in Ukraine (Arunyan, 2018). The passport can function as an instrumental asset used to enter countries outside Ukraine. Many people use their Hungarian citizenship to work in Hungary. The tense relations with Russia following the Russian annexation of Crimea and the Russian military involvement in Eastern Ukraine, has resulted in economic instability in Ukraine, also hitting Transcarpathia. Inflation and unemployment rose steeply. People who had not already applied for Hungarian citizenship, did so after the crisis began. *“A Hungarian passport provides certainty when the situation will worsen more”* (Rákóczi Association, personal communication, July 18, 2019). It is, however, possible to work with a Ukrainian passport in the European Union as well. Ukrainian people are allowed to enter the EU without visa (Jászberényi, 2019). The benefits of using the Hungarian passport are that one doesn't have to return to Ukraine every three months. It is also more convenient to show the Hungarian passport at the Hungarian border, and the Ukrainian one at the Ukrainian border. Because of the many border controls, people are more or less forced to request a new passport at least every two years because of the many stamps (Talk with students on the street, personal communication, June 3 2019). By using the two passports, stamps are not needed. Another instrumental benefit is that people with a Hungarian citizenship are allowed to use a car in Ukraine that is registered in Hungary; important, since cars are cheaper in Hungary (Talk with students on the street, personal communication, June 3 2019). Obviously, the Hungarian passport can also function as an identity symbol, a symbolic asset of really being a Hungarian from Hungary, not a second-class Hungarian from outside the borders (Pogonyi, 2018). This is also one of the goals mentioned by Csergo (2005); by offering citizenship enabling co-ethnics to move to the co-state. The citizenship also extends the benefits of symbolic and cultural membership through rhetorical inclusion, trans-border cultural exchanges and ethnic identity cards (Waterbury, 2010).

The following vignette shows that the double passport, among other things, is used as an instrumental asset to make the access to both Ukraine and Hungary easier.

### Vignette

#### Passport control Hungary to Ukraine

*We are sitting with nine people in a Volkswagen van. Janos, the driver, a man around 35 years old, is turning around in his chair and looks at me: ‘Can I have your passport? Or which passport do you use? Never mind, for you it doesn’t really matter anyway, ha ha’. I give him my Dutch passport, the other passengers give their Hungarian passports to Janos. At the*

*Hungarian border they only check our passports and we can go to the Ukrainian border control. There is just one car waiting. Janos says that a friend of him, who is also a driver, called and told him that the other border crossing had a waiting line of four hours, so therefore he chooses to go to this border crossing. Janos turns around again and gives all the Hungarian passports back to the passengers and receives the Ukrainian passports for the Ukrainian border control. The passengers put their Hungarian passport back in their handbag before a Ukrainian officer comes. 'Do you always switch your passport?', I ask the woman next to me. She nods, but doesn't speak, this is the only time in the four-hour journey that she doesn't start to talk to me. The Ukrainian border control does take more time, but again they only check our passports, they look through the window to me, probably because I am the only one with a Dutch passport. I am also the only passenger of the Volkswagen van who receives a stamp in my passport. The other passengers don't need an entering stamp, since they travel with the Ukrainian passport and the Hungarian one in their handbag. (Personal communication, June 2019)*

As brought up in Chapter 3, Koslowski (2003) argues that citizenship provides identity, trading rights and other benefits in exchange for participation and loyalty (Koslowski, 2003). In other words, Hungary wants to receive something in return for their support to the pre-Trianon regions. One main reason I can think of is the voting right people receive with their Hungarian passport; which can lead to an increase of possible voters for the political party of Orbán. According to Alexandra Ioan (2019) the Hungarian diaspora helped Fidesz to secure two-third majorities in parliament during the elections of 2014 and 2018. The ethnic kin communities voted to the extent of around 90 percent for Fidesz, this is not strange because Fidesz strongly campaigns in the ethnic kin communities (Ioan, 2019). Waterbury (2010) argues that there are multiple reasons for the Hungarian kin-state policies:

- (1) ethnic Hungarians as a good labour forces in Hungary; Hungary tries to recruit ethnic Hungarians. This might involve a risk, since not all people are willing to travel back and forth, so probably people are willing to migrate to Hungary for a better job. This can lead to a decline of Hungarians in the region. This endangers
- (2) the boundaries of the national identity are drawn by the people who speak the language, and that's probably why people refer to Hungary as a *nemzet* [nation]; the geographical map of people who speak Hungarian looks still a bit like the map before Trianon. That's why
- (3) kin-state policies are used as a political resource to create or maintain legitimacy and support for kin-state elites (Waterbury, 2010).

Orbán's election rhetoric's requires research by itself, there is not enough research done to make a conclusion whether Orbán uses the kin-state politics for votes only, that Orbán find it is a duty to help Hungarian in former territories, or a combination of both.

As stated before, according to the Ukrainian Constitution it is not allowed to have dual citizenship; art. 4 clearly states: "*There is single citizenship in Ukraine*" (Constitution of Ukraine, 2019). A main concern in Ukraine is that in case dual citizenship was to be legalised, many would apply for the Russian citizenship. Minorities that are living quite 'compactly' are

seen as a painful issue as well, because they are often not willing to fully integrate into Ukrainian society. The OSCE therefore argues that it is important for national minorities to integrate: *“At the same time, persons belonging to national minorities have a responsibility to integrate into the wider national society through the acquisition of a proper knowledge of the State language”* (OSCE, 1996). By integrating the chances of tensions are obviously lower. Not-integrating is not the only reason causing possible tensions; kin-state policies can lead to tensions as well.

## Political Tensions Between Hungary and Ukraine

Kin-state policies can lead to a radicalized anti-minority sentiment in the host state if kin-state members are viewed with suspicion because of their assumed loyalties to the neighbouring kin-state (Jenne, 2007). In Chapters 2 and 3 I already mentioned that in order to reach development, especially economic development, it is not possible to limit the economic improvement only to ethnic Hungarians living in the area. When one would do so, it does only lead to tensions in the region (Törzök, 2004). According to Törzök (2004), a region characterized by multi-lingualism and multi-culturalism has a better chance of economic success than a region with conflict between ethnic groups (Törzök, 2004). Of the people spoken to, almost all said that there are hardly any tensions between the various groups, except for some minor incidents. The main tension in Transcarpathia is the higher-level tension between Hungary and Ukraine. It is *“mainly a political and media thing”* (Talks with students on the street, personal communication, June 3, 2019). This kind of political tension is an issue people often do not feel or see.

The political and media triggers can, in turn, also lead to tensions between the two countries. The contemporary relationship between Hungary and Ukraine is not very good. The Hungarian minister of Foreign Affairs argued that in comparison to the other neighbours, the relationship with Ukraine is the most challenging (RFE/RL, 2019). On social media and regular media outlets the main political party of Hungary openly states that there are no borders between the Hungarians (see figure 11).



Figure 11: Screenshot of the Facebook page of the Minister of Justice Varga Judit, where she raised attention for a European citizen initiative; Cohesion policy for the equality of the regions and sustainability of the regional cultures. One of the reactions on this message on Facebook was from the ruling party Fidesz; “We thank everyone who supported the initiative by signing. “Because there is no border, where one/the same language is spoken”. Together. All.

Clearly, statements like this can lead to tensions between the two countries. In the aftermath of Hungary introducing the new citizenship law, the tensions rose. Since the Hungarian government referred to this new policy as ‘national reunification beyond the borders’, it obviously triggered tensions. Nowadays the most challenging issue, however, is a new language law. This State Language Law, although not implemented yet, states that Ukrainian is the only official state language in the country and in schools. In response to this new law, in 2019 the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that Hungary will continue to block NATO-Ukraine Council meetings until there is an agreement on minority rights (RFE/RL, 2019).

A tense situation erupted in 2018 when Ukraine demanded that a Hungarian individual working in the Hungarian Consulate in Berehove had to leave the country within 72 hours. This move was the result of the Ukrainian accusation that the Hungarian Consulate had issued illegal passports to ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine. In a Facebook post, the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Klimkin, warned that “the events around the distribution of Hungarian citizenship in Berehove, let’s say, do not add joy”, adding that “they only complicate the already not perfect relationship between the two countries” (RFE/RL, 2018).

Nevertheless, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, Magyar, said that the Ukrainian politics are changing in a positive way: “There is a good chance that they will finally leave us alone, and we have never wanted anything other than to be left alone because we have never had any demands that are incompatible with Ukrainian state interests” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019). The deputy minister also thanked the Hungarian state program and its implementers for their good work in the region and added that in the July 2019 elections Transcarpathian Hungarian voters had to come to the right decision (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019). The Hungarian program he referred to is responsible for supporting small- and medium-size businesses in Transcarpathia. The Ukrainian secret service is less positive of this Hungarian program, however, since it claimed that the development centre implementing the program, endangers the country’s territorial integrity; the development centre, in turn, saw this response as an attack against the Hungarian minority in Ukraine. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) conducted a criminal investigation against the Ede Egán Economic Development Centre for months, for reasons of alleged separatism (Sarnayi, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019).

In March 2020, the current Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Szijjártó, has tried to improve the relationship by pointing out that Hungary sides with Ukraine where issues of territorial integrity and sovereignty are concerned. The goal of Ukraine, he said, is that all Ukrainian citizens should be able to speak the state language, while Hungary’s goal is for Hungarian minorities across the border have to have the right to speak their own native language. Szijjártó explained that Hungarian schools provide Ukraine language lessons for seven hours a week, but admits that the standard of the Ukrainian language teaching is not

sufficient enough to speak it well. According to Szijjártó, Hungary is prepared to improve this. At the same time, Hungary presented a proposal to Ukraine that includes infrastructure development projects in Transcarpathia, a new border crossing station, improved motorway links and agriculture cooperation, all part of a 50 million euro loan. He also added, however, that it should not be overlooked that Ukraine has often violated the rights of Hungarians living in Transcarpathia, and other minorities in general (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2020). So, even if Hungary tries to improve its relationship with Ukraine, it once more stated that it will continue to block NATO-Ukraine Council meetings, until an agreement is reached on the restoration of minority rights.

The various tensions look, however, more conflict-prone than they really are; an interviewee rightly said that Ukraine has far more important conflicts they have to handle at the moment than the one stemming from the Hungarian influence in the region (Street talk 5, personal communication, June 2019). Ukraine desperately wants to become a member because Ukraine would become more powerful and countries would assist sooner if a country like Russia would enter Ukraine. It doesn't mean, however, that the blocking of Hungary is the only reason that Ukraine is not part of the NATO yet. Defending Ukraine in a war against Russia is probably the reason that countries are not thrilled with the possibility of Ukraine joining NATO. Article five of the treaty of NATO states that if an armed attack occurs against one of the member states, it shall be considered an attack against all members, and other members shall assist the attacked member, with armed force if necessary (NATO, 2017). The United States of America is not willing to go to war against Russia, only because of Ukraine (Cohen, 2016). Ukraine probably would have wanted this assistance during the summer of 2014, when the conflict was at highest point. However, to become a member of NATO the country has to adapt over 2000 NATO standards (Gaiduk, 2020). So, blocking Ukraine's NATO membership seems more powerful than it is, it is probably mainly used for Hungary's domestic politics.

One could argue that the Rákóczi Szövetség also contributes to more tensions between the two countries because it openly promotes Hungarians schools in Ukraine. Statements made by the association might lead to tensions between Ukraine and Hungary. It is, for example, quite something to give baby books to new-born Hungarians in Ukraine. This might certainly be seen as foreign interference in Ukrainian internal affairs. Statements and baby books are not the only issues that can trigger tensions, direct financial aid from Hungary can do this as well. Between 2017-2019 the Hungarian government provided 55.2 million euro in economic development funding for the Transcarpathian region (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2020). This funding is part of one of the policy tools Waterbury (2010) addresses: funding of external kin-community organizations and developing political, cultural, educational institutions in kin-communities. In July 2019 the Deputy Foreign Minister Magyar visited the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College and emphasised that the Hungarian



government will remain committed to strengthen Hungarian life in Transcarpathia, including the reinforcement of Hungarian enterprises that provide people with jobs and keeps the young people in the region. He added that this policy is a long-term policy that has become more or less permanent and that will become successful (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019). The Hungarian government spends a substantial amount of money on the development of the area, and probably because of this positive side-effect the Ukrainian government doesn't make a very big issue out of it. It does, however, when Hungarian ministers visit the region, since that seems more controversial for the outside world (Personal communication, July 18, 2019).

Pogonyi (2017) argues that Hungarian kin-state policies might lead to diplomatic tensions between the kin-state and neighbouring states, but it does not necessarily lead to interstate/inter-ethnic conflicts. According to Pogonyi (2017), there are no signs that extraterritorial citizenship increases Hungary's geopolitical influence in the region (Pogonyi, 2017). There is, of course, always a chance that this could happen. Hungarian passports for example include a brief sentence reminding the citizens that according to the Penal Code all citizens are obliged to obey all Hungarian laws, even when abroad (Pogonyi, 2017). This implies not only securing territorial borders, but also the demarcation of a citizenry as well.

### Benefits vs. Downsides of the Hungarian Influence

It is clear that the Hungarian government strives to and has an influence in the region. How far this influence reaches and in what way it has an influence on the daily life, depends on the context of the analysis. I would argue that ethnic Hungarians benefit from the kin-state politics; they receive aid from Hungary, can apply for Hungarian citizenship, and when they have children who go to a Hungarian school they receive certain benefits as well. Going to a Hungarian college is beneficial, because of the free education and students can apply for certain scholarships and trips. It should be noted, however, that almost all of these benefits are eligible for the non-Hungarians as well. They can attend the Hungarian College for free, while Ukrainian colleges are very expensive. Non-ethnic Hungarians can also go to a Hungarian primary school or high school. The main beneficial factor is that by learning the Hungarian language, some of the non-ethnic Hungarians can apply for Hungarian citizenship. Even when they don't want to migrate, they can do some seasonal jobs which are longer than three months and bring back the money to Transcarpathia. All money that comes in, is beneficial to everyone, mainly because it will be spent in local shops and markets or sent to family members who are still living in Transcarpathia.

All inhabitants benefit from the aid that Hungary provides to the region. As stated before the Hungarian government presented a development plan for the region of 50 million euros, mainly to improve the border crossing station and infrastructure. This is obviously beneficial for all people living in Transcarpathia. The Rákóczi Association argues that the Hungarian



government is giving a lot of aid in Transcarpathia, more than the Ukrainian government, *“Everyone knows this”* (Rákóczi Association, personal communication, July 18, 2019). During the Corona crisis the Hungarian government gave assistance to the region: 100 thousand face masks, 30 thousand pairs of gloves, and other equipment for hospitals in Transcarpathia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2020). This medical assistance is beneficial to the entire population of Transcarpathia. In Berehove I spoke with a Dutch woman who volunteered in the local hospital. She said that the Hungarian nurses received an extra bonus from ‘Orbán’ if they remained working in that hospital or in the region. It was needed, she said, because otherwise there wouldn’t be any nurse left (Dutch volunteer, personal communication, June 5 2019). The Ukrainian people also benefit.

There is, however, a group of ethnic Hungarians who don’t benefit from the aid from Hungary: Roma people. Most of the Roma in Transcarpathia speak the Hungarian language only, but they are not profiting from the Hungarian aid. The Hungarian government gives attention to ethnic Hungarians only, not to Roma people. The Rákóczi association doesn’t visit new-born Roma babies, it is not going to the Roma communities with their Hungarian school programs. The Hungarian government campaign doesn’t reach the Roma community in Berehove, and the Roma people often do not have the (financial) resources to get the information (Polischuk, 2016). Polischuk (2016) argues that one of the problems is the lack of documents; more often than not they don’t have any official document at all. By not having any official document, like a birth certificate, it is very hard to apply for any citizenship, Hungarian and/or Ukrainian. For acquiring Ukrainian citizenship undocumented Roma have to go to court, which is expensive, certainly for people who barely have money. Without official documents they can’t get a job. People without documents are not accepted in hospitals (Polischuk, 2016). Hungarians in Berehove spoke very patronizingly about the Roma community in the vicinity of Berehove. Discrimination of Roma people is a very big issue, requiring research by itself.

It is, however, not the case that the aid from Hungary solves all (other) problems in Transcarpathia. Human resources are lacking, prices of houses have reached Hungarian levels. In every sector there is currently a shortage of competent workers, which has resulted in higher wages (Jászberényi, 2019). This is, however, positive for the people who want to stay in the region. Given the shortages, they have a better chance of a well-paid job. Nevertheless, they still earn less than they would in Hungary. In other words, even the higher wages will not stop the migration from the region.

Salat (2013) argues that non-resident citizenship increases the dependency on the kin-state further; dependency is never beneficial for the development of a region. The financing system of the first Orbán government (1998-2002) created an unhealthy dependence on Hungary and hindered any reform, since reform was seen as a threat to the financial funding

and therefore the former Hungarian territories accepted this comfort of dependence (Törzsök, 2004). With the present aid programs, this might once more be the case. Today the assistance is really helpful for the entire population of the region, but when a new government would gain power the money flow might stop, leaving the region with no funds.

Despite the financial and economic assistance, young people are still leaving the region, because of the bad economic situation. It is understandable that people are moving to the neighbouring country, where they can speak the language and on average earn at least three times more. Nevertheless, moving is not an easy choice made lightly by the youngsters; most of them prefer to stay in their birthplace. Still, a majority of students I talked to wanted to go abroad after graduation, *“to explore Europe”* and to *“earn money”* (Interview with four first year students & Interview with graduating students, personal communication, June 3 2019). Somewhat surprisingly, not all of them wanted to go to Hungary. Germany and Great Britain were often mentioned, mainly because they have some relatives or friends who work over there. Often, they didn't give a clear answer why they don't want to go to Hungary, but one said: *“in Western Europe you can earn far more money to also be able to send some back”* (Graduating students, personal communication, June 3, 2019). Migration is not only an issue in Transcarpathia/Hungary, but rather a big problem for Central and Eastern Europe as such. After 1989, many people migrated to Western Europe so as to have a better salary (Holmes & Krastev, 2019). Two youngsters who had a job in the region didn't want to leave Ukraine, arguing that they wouldn't fit into the Western European world, *“far too liberal”* (Talk with students on the street, personal communication, June 3, 2019). One of the boys was 24 years old and had never visited another country, while the second one, 18 years of age, had only been to Hungary once. *“We also need something negative to say, so that we are forgetting our sad situation over here”* (Talk with students on the street, personal communication, June 3, 2019). So even if the aid from the Hungarian government does help the region, the opportunities abroad, especially for young people, look more propitious.

So, in this chapter Transcarpathia and Hungarian kin-state policies in Transcarpathia have been analysed. Transcarpathia is a poor region in Ukraine where various ethnicities live peacefully together. In Berehove, where the research was conducted, Hungarian identity and influence were visible. Most people lived and worked according to the Hungarian time, Hungarian language was spoken widely and Hungarian symbols as flags could be seen often on Hungarian buildings as churches and schools. These building were renovated with money from the Hungarian government, the Hungarian College for example was fully renovated by the Hungarian government. The Hungarian College of Higher Education is also popular among Ukrainian students, first of all because the education is for free (funded by the Hungarian government), and secondly by learning the Hungarian language by attending the Hungarian schools the students might be eligible for the Hungarian non-resident citizenship. People who didn't attend the Hungarian college but want to learn the Hungarian language

go to a Hungarian language school, also to be eligible for the non-resident Hungarian citizenship. The Hungarian schools in Transcarpathia are promoted by the Rákóczi Association (funded by the Hungarian government) by giving gifts, funds and scholarships to people who choose a Hungarian school, with the already reached goal to stop the decline of the number of students who attend the Hungarian schools. In Berehove the influence of Hungary didn't lead to tensions between the inhabitants, it did however on the higher political level: Ukraine doesn't want any interference from another country. The aid Hungary puts in the region is however tolerated. This aid which renovates buildings, improves infrastructure, gives bonuses to Hungarian nurses, and helps in emergency situations is beneficial for all people living in the region, non-ethnic Hungarians included. The downside of the help from Hungary is that it creates a dependency on the help from Hungary and the possibility for a lot of people to apply for the non-resident Hungarian citizenship may lead to a further increase of migration.

## Conclusion

The main goal of this thesis is to analyse the effects of the Hungarian kin-state politics for people living in Transcarpathia. Hungary is a kin-state because it pursues policies directed at the members of a co-ethnic group living abroad. The present Hungarian government pays a lot of attention towards Hungarians beyond the borders. In this thesis, I tried to focus on the effects of the Hungarian influence in western Ukraine by going there in person and analyse what the Hungarian influence means for the people in Transcarpathia, as well as what it means for the domestic politics.

Based on this, the central question is: *How does the current government of Hungary shape the Hungarian identity in Transcarpathia and what effects do Hungarian kin-state politics have for people living in Transcarpathia?*

In the first chapters of this thesis I analysed identity politics and kin-state politics, which often go together in the sense that the notion of (national) identity does play a central role in kin-state politics. Identity in itself is a complex phenomenon; different scholars have brought up various models. The Hungarian identity politics is mainly focused on historic events that have shaped and continue to shape the nation's identity. A feeling of belonging to a national identity, in turn, needs symbols like language, places, flags, statues.

After addressing the notion of identity and the way in which it is expressed, I gave a summary of the Hungarian history so as to better understand the contemporary Hungarian policies. The history of Hungary has been quite tumultuous, which (partly) explains the more nationalistic approach over the years. This nationalistic approach has in particular been strengthened by the 1920 Treaty of Trianon; this treaty is clearly a trauma for Hungary and every Hungarian, since it took away two-thirds of Hungarian territory, handing it over to various neighbouring countries. The various Hungarian governments tried everything to regain former land, even going so far as collaborating with Nazi Germany, which in the end didn't work out successfully. For almost half a century, during Soviet times, it was strictly taboo to bring up this treaty; after the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the treaty

returned to the political and diplomatic agenda. The biggest turn in kin-state policies came in 2010, when Orbán and his Fidesz party won the parliamentary elections.

Kin-state activism often includes three goals: promoting cross-border interaction, enabling co-ethnics to move to the kin-state, and strengthening co-ethnic communities abroad. The Hungarian government has also multiple reasons to pursue its policies on the Hungarians abroad; the government tries to recruit ethnic Hungarians as good labour forces, but they also want to keep the kin-communities and therewith the Hungarian identity abroad alive. The most important kin-state policy Orbán and his government initiated is the new citizenship law, according to which Hungarians beyond the border received the possibility to apply for a Hungarian passport when they can prove that they have Hungarian ancestors, in combination with an ability to speak Hungarian. As part of the citizenship, they also get the right to vote in Hungary. Several critics state that because of the non-resident citizens votes Orbán could win the 2014 and 2018 elections with a two-third majority in parliament. Handing out citizenship is not very good for the relations with neighbouring countries; it leads to tensions, because neighbours often have the idea that Orbán acts like those regions with a large Hungarian minority are somehow still part of Hungarian territory. Those tensions are, however, mostly felt at a 'higher', political and diplomatic level. In general, ordinary citizens in Transcarpathia don't feel any tensions; they are rather satisfied with the Hungarian support, especially because the Ukrainian authorities don't really support the peripheric region.

So the research question itself might seem quite simple, the answer is more complex. Identity-shaping is a complex phenomenon, and therefore hard to analyse. The Hungarian government strongly supports Hungarian identity-shaping in Transcarpathia by financing the Hungarian College of Higher Education and other cultural institutions as the Rákóczi Association. Given that many Ukrainian students attend Hungarian schools, primary and kindergartens included, the Hungarian identity is shaped in schools by learning Hungary's language and history, its songs and literature. Even when a child is not being raised by Hungarian parents, by attending a Hungarian school he/she will learn about the Hungarian culture and history. In other words, regardless of the background of the students, Hungarian identity is being shaped in Hungarian schools with students of different ethnicities in Ukraine.

The effects of the Hungarian kin-state politics for people living in Transcarpathia obviously differ from one individual to the other. However, for most people living in Transcarpathia the Hungarian help is beneficial. The benefits of the Hungarian support are multiple: buildings are renovated, infrastructure is being improved, and the Hungarian government helps out in crisis situations. All young people can go to the Hungarian College for free, and by learning the Hungarian language at a Hungarian (language) school most students can also

apply for a Hungarian passport; a piece of paper suggesting a chance of a better future, a potential entry way to the European Union.

There are also negative (side-)effects for the people in Transcarpathia: a form of dependency has been created, which might be harmful if the political landscape in Hungary changes and another government takes over. For the region and its demographic numbers as such the Hungarian kin-state politics might have negative consequences: the more people apply for and receive a Hungarian passport, the more people will most likely leave the region. Another negative effect is that due to the increased Hungarian influence in the region, interstate tensions with Ukraine have increased.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Because I conducted my research only in Berehove, a city where Hungarians and Ukrainian are fairly mixed, it could sketch a less-balanced, too positive picture. In locations with a (smaller) minority of Hungarians, more tensions might be present, or at least perceived by the population.

The depth of the research could also be improved by speaking to parents of children who attend a Hungarian primary school. Why did they choose for a Hungarian school; did the Rákóczi Association had to do anything with their decision? Looking back at my research, the interview with the Rákóczi Association would have been even more useful when I had conducted it prior to the field research in Ukraine instead of afterwards.

Another important (and logical) recommendation is to choose a better moment in the year to visit the schools. I visited Berehove in June, and was lucky that there were some students left in the Hungarian College. All other (primary and high) schools were already closed for the Summer.

The notion of identity-shaping is hard to analyse; a combination of qualitative research with some quantitative research might have given more insight. Such a combination strengthens any research. By handing out questionnaires about the students' identity, I might have collected a better and a deeper understanding of their identity(-shaping). However, being in the college and talking to students already showed me a lot.

## Final Words

This thesis has obviously tried to analyse the retrieved information as objectively as possible. By being able to speak and understand the Hungarian language, I could get a better grip on the situation. Although small-talks with locals were not recorded, their reactions are also represented in this thesis. Although I'm not able to speak the state language, Ukrainian, I wonder whether knowledge of it would have added more information; especially since most local people do speak both languages and otherwise someone translated the information for me.

It was, however, more difficult than I anticipated to talk about the dual citizenship issue. When recording people, they didn't want to bring it up and talk about it, they just sat in



silence and smiled at me. People I met in stores and on the streets were more willing to talk about this issue, probably because of the more informal setting without any notebooks and recording devices.

This thesis has offered some insight on the benefits and downsides for the locals of Berehove as far as the influence of the Hungarian government is concerned. Most publications dealing with the topic of Orbán's kin-state politics only address the kin-state politics as such and the tensions with the neighbouring countries. In this thesis, however, the real effects 'on the ground' are shown. Because of the rather limited research conducted about the effects on the ground, it may seem surprising that the effects of Hungarian kin-state policies are primarily positive for the people living in Transcarpathia. The Hungarian Constitution states that Hungary *shall facilitate the survival and development of their communities; it shall support their efforts to preserve their Hungarian identity* (Hungarian Constitution, 2011). Based on my research, I can conclude that Hungary certainly facilitates the development of the Hungarian community in Berehove and that it preserves the Hungarian identity as well. They facilitate the development by giving economic support to the region by renovating buildings and infrastructure and it preserves the Hungarian identity by supporting Hungarian schools and institutions.

For the people of Berehove and the wider Transcarpathia I hope that the assistance and help from Hungary will last, but then in a sustainable way, so that they can build a better future in their 'own' Transcarpathia. I have to add, however, that they should also help the Roma population in Transcarpathia, because no one should be left behind; in addition, Hungary should try to keep the relationship with Ukraine peaceful. If so, the Hungarian aid will be a blessing rather than a curse. After all, Transcarpathia is a beautiful region with beautiful, hospitable people. Therefore, I hope that in the future they can even more proudly say that they are Transcarpathian.

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