

# I. A CHRONOLOGICAL DIGEST OF EVENTS AFFECTING THE ROMA OF HUNGARY IN 2002<sup>1</sup>

## January

Fourteen Roma organisations signed themselves up to an agreement on cooperation in the 2002 general elections that was hammered out between the government coalition parties, Fidesz and the MDF, and the Lungo Drom National Gypsy Promotional and Civic Alliance. Amongst these are the Phralipe National Independent Organisation, independent organisations for the promotion of Gypsy interests in the city of Miskolc and in Somogy, Szabolcs and Győr-Moson-Sopron counties, and the Gypsy Promotional Alliance.

In the view of Flórián Farkas, the chairman of Lungo Drom, the agreement with Fidesz and the MDF will enable more Roman politicians to enter parliament, since it allows Lungo Drom to nominate a candidate for one of the top 15 slots in the parties' joint national list, and one each in slots 16-25 and 26-35, as well as in each of seven regional lists.

The MSZP was not planning to reach a similar agreement with any Roma organisation, but it would be fielding several candidates of Gypsy origin, such as Aladár Horváth, previously a representative for the SZDSZ, on its national list. Amongst the possible candidates were Tibor Oláh, chairman of the MSZP's Gypsy section; Éva Orsós, former head of the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities; and László Teleki, deputy chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGMSG). As a result, Teleki might be the sole Roma politician amongst the members of the NGMSG who would not be included on the Fidesz national list but on that of the MSZP.

The life and situation of the Gypsies of Hétes, a village just outside the S.W. Hungarian town of Kaposvár, have been chosen as the subject of a doctoral thesis by Paris-based sociologist Véronique Klauber. One of the aims of the study will be to demonstrate convincingly that this community is often stigmatized groundlessly.

For complicity in a recent case of fraud and forgery of official documents that caused substantial losses, the Veszprém County Court sentenced János Kozák, chairman of the local Roma minority self-government in the western Hungarian town of Pápa and a representative in the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, to 16 months' imprisonment and also banned him from holding public office for two years. The court upheld the charge

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<sup>1</sup> Items selected from a search of the on-line database maintained by the *Népszabadság* daily newspaper

that a sum of HUF 2.2 million nominally granted in social support to a relative had been unlawfully utilised by János Kozák for purposes of mending the roofing of his house in Pápa. Kozák, who has no prior criminal record, had pleaded innocent to the charge and has lodged an appeal against the sentence.

Almost one year ago Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced that a HUF 300 million house-building programme was to be launched under the supervision of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGSMG), yet not one house had been completed to date, claimed the Roma Press Centre. László Teleki, deputy chairman of NGMSG, stated that the money had not yet been transferred to that body's account. On the basis of an agreement reached between the Ministry for the Economy and NGMSG in May 2001, HUF 20 million had been earmarked for maintenance work on buildings, HUF 80 million for setting up a production line for the manufacture of unburned mud-bricks, HUF 70 million to fund organisational work involved in the building programme, whilst the remaining Ft 130 million was to have provided social support for two hundred families with large numbers of children to put down the deposit required for construction. According to the Roma Press Centre's news report, the Szociális Építő Kht (Social Construction Non-profit Organisation) set up to implement the programme had been dissolved due to insolvency, and thus in late 2001 the economics ministry and NGMSG had been obliged to modify their agreement.

Csaba Hende, under-secretary of state for the Ministry of Justice, provided a detailed review of measures that had been taken on behalf of the Roma community. He emphasized that the government was willing to listen to criticisms from expert opinion, but not to views which flatly denied that any results had been achieved. Compared with the previous legislative session, the sum of money budgeted for Gypsy affairs had been increased several times over. Thanks to educational scholarships, a real "good-to-study fever" was now perceptible amongst Roma students. These monthly bursaries of several thousand forints represented a significant source of income for many Roma families, with Gypsy students often filling a role as breadwinners for their family. Hende had even heard of instances where Roma parents would berate or punish children who were doing badly at school, as under-performers would lose scholarship money.

Professor Dominique Rosenberg, a French expert in the Council of Europe, commented in connection with the group of Roma from Zámoly who have applied to Strasbourg for refugee status: "a very roundabout legal has been resorted to in order to send out a political warning message to all countries seeking accession to the European Union." Professor Rosenberg, who previously has herself strenuously criticized the Hungarian government for the policies it has pursued towards Gypsies, asserted that such criticisms were often exaggerated and unfounded.

Members of the state legal-aid network set up for Gypsies have been consulted by close to two hundred Roma complainants over the past three months. According to an analysis commissioned by the Ministry of Justice, the largest number of complaints were connected with residence permits, but many applications had also been received over discrimination in treatment under the criminal law, social provision and employment. Lawyers employed by the network had undertaken to provide legal representation for Roma complainants in twenty-two cases to date.

## **February**

Trailing somewhat behind the police and waitresses, Hungary's Roma community organised its first national beauty contest this weekend in Budapest. A jury panel of 14, which included the Indian ambassadress, the deputy managing director of Hungarian State Railways, a Pest County police officer, and restaurant-owner Dezső Csámpa, made their choice from a group of 26 contestants.

Viktor Orbán referred to 2001 as a breakthrough year in his state-of-the-nation address, held at the Vigadó Concert Hall in Budapest. He placed particular stress on the fact that there had been a thirteen-fold increase in the number of Gypsy students receiving scholarships during 2001 for, as he noted, the path towards advancement for the Roma population lay through work and education.

The MSZP promised that, in the event that it should win the general elections, it would provide the Roma populace with new jobs and greater support than hitherto on residence permits, as well as, amongst other things, making racial hatred a criminal offence. Péter Medgyessy, who will be running for the post of prime minister, announced that six Roma politicians would be placed on the party's national list. If the MSZP were to gain power, its intention was to engage more Roma in the government's work and to improve the conditions under which local minority self-governments operate. The MSZP would seek to criminalize incitement to hatred against minority communities and put in place legislation that guarantees equality of treatment for every Hungarian citizen and prohibits unfair discrimination.

The leaders of several local Roma minority self-governments in Somogy County would be organising a nation-wide rally in March, said Mrs Imre Ignácz, leader of the minority self-government for Nagyatád and district, which is one of the parts of the country most densely populated by people of Roma descent. She declared that all requests addressed to Flórián Farkas, chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGMSG) had so far been fruitless: no responses had been forthcoming. They were therefore looking for other ways in which their interests might be furthered. According to Mrs

Imre Ignácz, Roma minority local government councils had been provided with neither financial or operational terms on which to function. She said it was intolerable that leaders of local Roma minority self-governments had been carrying out their duties for years without remuneration. She regarded it as damaging that it had proved impossible to change the practice whereby smaller local government councils received state support on an equal basis, rather than in proportion to the size of their populace. In 2001, Nagyatád and district had attempted in vain to secure support for cultural programmes, for preservation of traditions or job creation; each of nearly twenty requests had been turned down.

Tensions have risen in the village of Halmajugrán, near the town of Gyöngyös in the north-eastern county of Heves, following a ruling by the Court of Labour which reinstated the previously dismissed director of the local general (elementary) school in her post. The headmistress had been dismissed by the parish council in 2001 because the local Roma minority self-government had accused her of racism. Since then the school has been run by a substitute director. Eighty per cent of pupils at the school, which serves a settlement of 1,200, are of Roma descent. Last year's dismissal of the headmistress had divided the locals: some parents took her side but the majority approved of the local authority's decision. After the Court of Labour's ruling, many are now saying that if the headmistress should return to her post, they will organise a protest and refuse to allow their children to attend school.

A boarding school to nurture Roma talent, supported by the European Union's PHARE restructuring programme, is due to open this September in the town of Ózd. Run by the county self-government of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, in the north-east of the country, the institution is intended to lay the foundations for higher education for secondary-school students of Gypsy origin. Preliminary estimates suggest that 70-75 students will apply for places at the school, which is to be created within the currently inappropriately utilized Endre Ady College. The main aim of the teaching staff, who will supply both top-up and special training needs, is to prepare students for further education at the tertiary level.

Fidesz and Lungo Drom were promising opportunities for work and further education – that was the message being relayed after a meeting between Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the chairmen of the main government party and the leading Roma political organisation. Following the discussion, Zoltán Pokorni declared that Fidesz would undertake, as part of its electoral platform, that in the next parliamentary session all young Gypsies who wish to study will have a chance to enter higher education; no obstacles or limits would be set on this by the number of available scholarships. It was also necessary to elaborate a system for aiding, tutoring and nurturing the talents of Roma children who were in the upper years at general school. A basis for this had already been created by the János Arany talent-promoting programme. The other major goal, Pokorni considered, would be to offer a job for every person who seeks work. The state needed to create workplaces in the more

poorly developed regions through deliberate targeting of industrial investment. In tandem with the Ministry of Family Affairs, they would set up a Bureau for Roma Integration, which would also have a point of reporting within the Prime Ministerial Office. The Bureau's work would be subject to semi-annual review during the term of government by the head of government and the chairman of Lungo Drom.

## **March**

Flórián Farkas proposed that job creation be supplemented by development of local districts and the elimination of slum areas and hovels. According to the chairman of the NGMSG, the Roma population needed long-term employment, not just seasonal jobs on public projects. Roma unemployed would need to be helped back to the jobs market by training and retraining courses.

The chairman of the Roma Parliament of Hungary called on the country's Roma population to support the MSZP, rather than Fidesz and the alliance that it was fostering with the Hungarian Truth and Life Party (MIÉP), as in his opinion the Socialists were prepared to adjust their policies to actual Roma needs. That was disputed by Béla Osztokján, vice-chairman of the NGMSG, in whose view the leaders of the government parties had made it quite clear that they had no wish to cooperate with István Csurka's MIÉP.

There is a risk that the Roma electorate, through the votes given to Lungo Drom, might land themselves with a government that supported MIÉP – that was the message of an open letter signed by more than 40 leading Gypsy intellectuals. The letter calls on Roma to “vote for the democratic party that you find most congenial. No one, however, should vote for the right-extremist MIÉP or for those parties and organisations which do not categorically rule out the chance of political cooperation with MIÉP. We call upon the leaders of Lungo Drom to show their true colours by declaring that they will not assist an anti-Gypsy party into power through the votes that are cast for them.”

The Hungarian government has, by and large, respected the civil rights of its citizens, but there are serious problems in a number of areas, concludes the US State Department in the section on Hungary in this year's report on the situation of civil rights around the world. Anti-Semitic and racial discrimination were still persisting in Hungary. During the past year numerous racially motivated attacks had been reported, especially those directed against the Roma populace. Social discrimination against the Roma remained a grave problem.

The Ministry of Health has commenced a representative national survey in order to reveal, amongst other things, the health status of the Gypsy populace and their relations to the institutions that provide health services. The research would cover sixty settlements

and 1,200 families; evaluation of the primary findings was still in progress. ÁNTSZ general census data indicate that in Hungary there are close to five hundred (483 to be exact) shanty settlements which present a hazard to the populace from a public health standpoint. Estimates suggest the number of Roma living in such shanty settlements or shanty-like housing conditions may be as high as one hundred thousand. Citing earlier research, the Ministry of Health stated that the health status of the Roma populace, for a complex of cultural, social and lifestyle reasons, is on average worse than that of the non-Gypsy populace.

The general life expectancy for Gypsies is very much worse, being on average 10-15 years shorter. In its press briefing material the Ministry refers to the Roma population as “an ethnic group under threat from infectious diseases and epidemics”. A majority of this populace eat unhealthily, consuming cheap foods rich in fats and carbohydrates, and are undernourished or starving. Emphysema and chronic bronchitis are the most prevalent diseases, whilst addictions are very common. The situation is exacerbated by the invidious discrimination that is manifested against Gypsies in the provision of health services.

A course in social and training administration for unemployed Roma, sponsored by the Galilei Fund, has taken place at the Pécs Regional Centre for Manpower Development and Training. Financial assistance for running this has come from the European Union’s PHARE programme, job centres, the Soros Foundation, the United Kingdom’s Know-how Fund, the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, the Gandhi Public Foundation, and the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities. Of the fifteen participants in the experimental programme, ten obtained the secondary-school diploma (*érettségi*), four gained vocational certificates, whilst one completed all ten classes. All participants have been promised help by the job centres in finding employment, but some will be applying to read Roma Studies at the University of Pécs.

## **April**

The Hungarian government will need to take more effective measures to promote a culture of comprehensive human rights and to crack down on violence against women, concluded the United Nations Organisation’s Human Rights Commission. This body took Hungary to task on several points. On the basis of testimony supplied by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, it considers that Hungary has made significant progress in the domain of strengthening democratic institutions, and it welcomes the build-up of the system of local minority self-governments. On the other hand, it deplores the absence of comprehensive legislation to tackle discrimination and requests the government to take steps to set this in place. The situation of the country’s Roma minority was a cause for concern as, despite governmental measures, this situation could be said to be disadvantageous in

all areas subject to the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights. Discrimination against the Roma population in employment, residence rights, education, social provision, and participation in public life was especially worrying. The commission drew attention, amongst other things, to the maltreatment of Roma individuals whilst under police custody and the existence of segregated Gypsy schools. Beyond the further legislative steps couched in the recommendations it had formulated for the Hungarian government, training of those in positions of authority, especially the police, as well as a campaign designed to alter public attitudes towards the Roma would also be desirable.

In the first round of the general elections, an overwhelming majority of the Roma populace gave their support to the MSZP on the national list; within individual constituencies, however, votes were more divided between candidates for the government coalition and opposition parties, pronounced László Teleki, deputy chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government and a parliamentary candidate for the Socialists, with reference to the feedback he had received from twelve counties and his own observations. The Roma politician thought that many more Gypsies in the registered electorate had voted – an estimated 200,000 – than had been predicted before the elections. He suggested that the overriding intention of the Roma electorate had been to prevent the possibility of the right-extremist MIÉP from entering into government. Teleki hoped that this electorate would turn out in similar numbers for the second round of voting.

Four Roma politicians have won seats in the new National Assembly. No Roma candidate had previously entered the legislature under the Fidesz flag, but now three have done so in a single swoop. The ranks of MSZP members now include a single Gypsy representative. Previously, neither Fidesz nor the MDF have made efforts to ensure that voices speaking for the Roma populace would be able to take part in the work of parliament, but in December 2001 the two government parties struck an agreement with Lungo Drom, the country's largest Gypsy political organisation, under which they undertook to include ten Roma candidates on the national and regional lists. As a result, three of those candidates have gained parliamentary seats: Flórián Farkas, leader of Lungo Drom and chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGMSG); József Varga, leader of the Public Foundation for the Gypsies of Hungary; and Mihály Lukács, chairman of Lungo Drom's steering committee. Six Roma candidates were included on the national list for the MSZP, but only László Teleki, deputy chairman of the NGMSG and leader of the National Association of Gypsy Organisations, stood a realistic chance of election. The forecast odds were borne out: after the second round of voting, it became clear that László Teleki would be the sole Gypsy politician amongst those gaining seats for the Socialist party. The ensuing parliamentary term is expected to bring significant changes in policy towards the Hungary's Gypsies, as this is the first time four Roma representatives have been present simultaneously in the legislature.

Most Gypsy students in further education are trained as teachers, with teacher training colleges in first place. Humanities and nursery- and elementary-teacher training faculties at university level, are in joint second place, with almost identical numbers of students. Contrary to popular belief, a relatively high proportion of Roma students are taking technical subjects; this tends to be the choice for males, including one quarter of those in day-release schemes. Technical subjects are followed by training in the arts, which in virtually every case means music. Even in this type of training the representation of girls is very low indeed. Very few young Roma enter college tuition for the army or the police.

## May

Three years ago the Soros Foundation launched a Roma health initiative. Experiences gathered under this have been assessed at several conferences and most recently gathered together in a new published volume. The health status of young Roma women is the subject of a paper by Csilla Csoboth, György Gyukits, György Purebl and Andor Ürmös. Roma women of 20-24 years are more disadvantaged in terms of educational qualifications and employment than non-Roma women of the same age group; due to widespread poverty, a substantial proportion are unable to purchase even basic consumer articles. When they investigated utilisation of health-care resources, however, the researchers found there was no major disparity between the two groups: socially disadvantaged young Roma women are not being deprived of health-care provision. It is possible, their study suggests, that this is attributable to the system of what is termed 'head-count' financing for general practitioners, which gives them an incentive to attract as many national health insurance cards as possible to their own surgery panel.

One interesting finding of this investigation is that Roma women make greater use of hospital care but less use of specialist out-patient clinics. The explanation for this may be that Roma women come to the attention of medical specialists at a more advanced stage of disease, by which time they require hospital admission. Young Roma women are much more likely to suffer from depression than their non-Roma peers; almost one in ten is severely depressed, whilst barely more than 2% of non-Roma women are similarly affected. Depression, which is related primarily to a person's social situation and his or her experience of that situation, may play a direct role in the aetiology of a great diversity of serious somatic illnesses and is also linked with the emergence of self-destructive patterns of behaviour. Around 26% of both Roma and non-Roma women alike had entertained suicidal thoughts, but in response to the question as to whether an actual suicide attempt had been made, 12% of the Gypsy, as opposed to 'just' 6% of non-Gypsy, young women answered positively. A significant difference was also revealed in the uptake of invitations to undergo various screening tests for the prevention and early detection of disease, with Roma women showing up less favourably on every single test. The biggest cause for con-



cern is the failure to attend chest X-ray screenings, as it is well known, the researchers point out, that tuberculosis represents a threat primarily for those living in socially deprived conditions.

In an open letter, Miklós Pálfi, chairman of the Szolnok district gypsy minority self-government and deputy-chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGMSG), has called on all NGMSG leaders who had won parliamentary seats via party national lists to resign from the body. He has reminded them that a ruling by the NGMSG General Secretariat in the first quarter of 1998 had forbidden its members from campaigning for National Assembly seats on any party platform. He notes that changes in personnel and structure were inevitable as a result of this and also in recognition of the fact that NGMSG, being a public body, must not be subject to party-political interests. Miklós Pálfi is of the opinion that it a necessary first step that all officials who had obtained seats in the National Assembly under various party colours see it as their moral and political duty to resign their positions in NGMSG.

It is expected that László Teleki will become Under-Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs in the new Office of the Prime Minister. Teleki, deputy chairman of the NGMSG and leader of the National Association of Gypsy Organisations, is the only Roma politician to have obtained a parliamentary seat as a Socialist candidate in the general election. The suggestion that Péter Medgyessy, the incoming prime minister, intends to head a cabinet subcommittee dealing with Roma affairs has been confirmed from several sources. Though the decision has not yet been officially taken, the indications are that Teleki would act as secretary to that subcommittee.

## **June**

Flórián Farkas will continue as chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGMSG). At Friday's meeting of the body at Nyíregyháza, a majority of NGMSG members present voted against a motion that had raised personal objections to him. Farkas' opponents considered that the chairman's resignation was necessary in the light of a ruling by the NGMSG General Secretariat four years ago under which members were not permitted to campaign for any party in parliamentary elections. That currently applies to three of NGMSG members: the chairman, Mr Farkas, and also deputy chairman Mihály Lukács, who both gained National Assembly seats as Fidesz candidates, and László Teleki, prospective under-secretary of state for Gypsy affairs, who has been elected as a Socialist. According to a press release from the Roma Press Centre, Teleki, who is currently a NGMSG vice-chairman, takes the view that the NGMSG does not split between left- and right-wing party affiliations but between a group that supports democratic processes and one that is opposed to this.

The new prime minister is counting on active participation from minority groups both in the drafting of legislation and in deliberations of the National Council that will carry out the functions of a second chamber in Parliament. Péter Medgyessy promised, amongst other things, that the country's minorities would be gaining new institutions.

“The number of local minority self-governments may be as much as doubled after the local elections this autumn,” reckons Antal Heizer, who is expected to be chairman-designate of the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities. Whilst welcoming that growth, steps must be taken to prevent abuses. In his opinion, legislation is needed to minimize the chances of candidates not belonging to a minority entering the elections for seats on minority self-governments.

László Kállai, chairman of the Jászladány Gypsy minority self-government, has turned to the Parliamentary Commissioner (Ombudsman) for Minority Rights and the Office for County Public Administration in protest at the manner in which he alleges the Jászladány self-government has unilaterally altered the syllabus at local general schools. Mr Kállai stated that through its recent decision the local authority had removed a remedial programme for Gypsy children from the curriculum and therefore would no longer receive extra state funding for Roma education. He put the resulting shortfall in income for the settlement's school at over HUF 1 million.

“Each government has brought worthwhile measures; what has been missing is a sense of method,” László Teleki, Socialist parliamentary representative and Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister, characterised Roma policies over the past twelve years. In his view, the new government, before committing itself to any major initiatives of its own, needs to gain an accurate picture of the present situation of Hungary's Roma population. He confirmed that he was voluntarily giving up his former post as vice-chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government as being incompatible with post of under-secretary of state.

## **July**

The Supreme Court imposed a public-interest fine of HUF 100,000 on the owner of a bar in Patvarc, just outside the N. Hungarian town of Balassagyarmat, for refusing to serve Roma inhabitants of the village. The head of the Office for the Protection of the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities, which had initiated the legal action, said that this ruling set a ground-breaking precedent. The proprietress of the public house in Patvarc had become the first person in Hungary to be successfully prosecuted for discriminating against the local Roma community. According to Roma villagers the only result of the legal action, which has been on-going for three years, has been that they

are now able to enter the pub, but they are left feeling that they are served only grudgingly.

Péter Medgyessy, the head of government, will take the chair of a Roma Coordinatory Council that is to be formed in early September. This council will be tasked with preparing and implementing the government's strategy for Gypsy affairs, and with coordinating the activities of other ministries in this area. The government has not yet decided on the composition of the 21-person body, but it may be assumed that seats will be taken not just by Gypsy experts; the Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs is counting on the assistance of Anna Csongor, director of the Autonomia Foundation, for instance. Aladár Horváth, head of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation and the prime minister's adviser on Gypsy affairs, would also participate in the deliberations. It is also likely that Flórián Farkas, chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGMSG), leader of Lungo Drom, and a Fidesz parliamentary representative, will be amongst the Roma politicians taking a seat in the council. In a recent radio debate, Jenő Zsigó, leader of the Roma Parliament, was sharply critical, calling it a tragic mistake that the Socialist party had nominated the recently resigned vice-chairman of the NGMSG as a parliamentary representative and subsequently under-secretary of state. In Zsigó's opinion, Teleki – whom he characterised as Stone Age in his thinking and a '*kapo*' – had been a weight on the Roma population of Hungary for the past eight years. Despite those criticisms, the under-secretary of state said he would be glad to see the leader of the Roma Parliament too as a member of the new coordinatory council.

The government has boosted the funding set aside for financing the study scholarships awarded to young Roma students by the sum of HUF 400 million. That represents an increase of about 35 per cent compared with the sum that was budgeted for in 2001, and it is estimated that it will facilitate studies for approximately 17,000 young Gypsies. Over the past five years the number of such scholarships has risen fifteen-fold, and a further 50 per cent growth is expected during the coming academic year.

“During the last fifty days the Roma of Hungary have received political compensation for the past fifty years,” declared László Teleki, Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister. It was currently planned that ministerial commissioners concerned with policy for the Gypsy community would be functioning within six ministries. Significantly more money than hitherto was being earmarked for scholarships for Roma students, and local minority self-governments could also count on greater financial support in the future.

This year, for the first time, a Roma tent would be set up for those attending the Sziget Festival at the beginning of August, with the aim being to introduce them to Gypsy

culture, announced Radio 'C', Hungary's first Roma radio station and organiser of this initiative, at a press conference. Radio 'C' sees the Roma Tent programme as an invaluable opportunity to arouse interest in and, it is hoped, sympathy towards this culture, leading to its wider acceptance amongst the annually growing number of festival-goers. A wide spectrum of Gypsy musics will be featured in the tent's musical offering, with audiences able to hear a range of European – French, Spanish, Italian, Austrian and Romanian – as well as Hungarian performers, with the latter including groups representing both the more traditional musics of the Hungarian and Vlach Gypsy communities as well as jazz and Roma rap. Discussions will be staged every afternoon, with panels that include political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, ethnographers and Roma politicians, to debate such issues as Roma radicalism and nationalism, the intricacies of Roma politics, the role of Roma intellectuals, and cultural conflicts between the Roma and the majority society.

## **August**

The Ministry of Employment Policy and Labour has established a Directorate General for Equal Opportunities. At a press conference on Wednesday, the minister, Péter Kiss, introduced Katalin Lévai, who has been appointed head of the new institution. The Directorate General's three secretariats will concern themselves with occupational rehabilitation, equal opportunities for both genders, and programmes for the Roma workforce.

“No political power can build its policy on hatred, because anyone who foments hatred is bound to fail,” proclaimed Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy yesterday evening at a ceremony in Nagykanizsa to lay a wreath in memory of the Roma Holocaust. In his address before the sole memorial to the Roma Holocaust to have been erected in Hungary, the head of government declared that Hungarian society has a historical debt to pay to its Roma populace. In Medgyessy's view, the Roma of Hungary were not only victims of the genocide carried out under the Nazi terror of the Second World War but also suffered grave wrongs as a result of the exclusionary actions of post-1945 left-wing authoritarian régimes, which refused to recognize Gypsies officially as an ethnic minority in their own right. The prime minister stated that Gypsies had been the biggest losers in society since the change of régime in 1989-90, which was why it was the duty of his new cabinet to improve the situation of the Roma populace with the greatest possible urgency. He noted that amongst the first steps already taken towards this goal were the creation of a under-secretary of state with specific responsibility for Roma affairs, the appointment of commissioners for Roma affairs within six further ministries, and the 40 per cent additional budget funding that had been set aside for Gypsy education in the current year. The prime also announced that it was possible that the first Hungarian ambassador of Roma descent might be appointed in the near future.

Two ceremonies to mark the beginning of the new school year are due to take place the coming weekend at the Hősök tér general school in Jászladány – one on Saturday, organised by the local authority, and the other on Sunday, held by the newly established Mihály Antal Foundation school. The private school has not yet acquired the ministerial permit required to license its operation. The local Gypsy minority self-government will be mounting a silent demonstration during both opening ceremonies in protest against what it regards as the unlawfully created foundation school, which in its view will serve to segregate pupils of Gypsy background. “The private school requires the payment of tuition fees, and impoverished Roma families will be unable to afford these,” maintained László Kállai, chairman of the local Gypsy self-government. “Of the 650 pupils at the Jászladány local authority general school, a total of 205 children had been withdrawn by the end of August, so it can be anticipated that this will be the initial enrolment with which the foundation establishment starts,” commented Mrs Ferenc Vincze, director of the local authority school. She added that the new school building, which was only completed six years ago, had been divided in two, with the foundation school’s pupils due to occupy one wing and those attending the local authority school occupying the other wing.

A proposal to hold an election for a Roma minority self-government in the Twelfth District of Budapest was initiated by Dénes Kosztolányi, a Fidesz parliamentary representative and leader of the Fidesz faction in the local authority, along with several other district politicians affiliated to other parties. The application, however, was rejected by the local election committee. At a meeting on Tuesday, the committee decided unanimously that it would not schedule such an election. In giving their reasons for the decision, it had come to light that of the six proponents, Mr Kosztolányi had stated that he personally had no affiliations to the Roma minority, whilst none of the other five had declared any such affiliation. According to a press statement released by Mr Kosztolányi, the intention had been to express solidarity with the Roma community; they believed that this step would be a demonstrative way of standing up for Gypsies.

An election alliance was entered into on Thursday by the Forum of Gypsy Organisations of Hungary, the Roma Parliament, the Democratic Roma Organisation, the National Association of Gypsy Organisations, the Roma Civil Rights Foundation, the National Alliance of Roma Graduates, the Integrationist Roman Alliance, the Association of Roma Women in Public Life, and the New Roma Round-Table Alliance. According to the terms of their collaborative agreement, the primary goals of the coalition are “overthrowing the position held by Lungo Drom under the leadership of Flórián Farkas, along with reform and democratic restructuring of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government.”

## September

Referring to a failure to meet the conditions prescribed by regulations, the Ministry of Education refused to issue an identification number to the controversial Jászladány foundation school. Without an ID number the school is unable to commence operation. The Parliamentary Commissioner (Ombudsman) for Minority Rights earlier condemned the creation of the school as a discriminatory measure aimed against the local Gypsy populace.

Tempers are still running high over the Jászladány foundation school. The school board convoked an extraordinary meeting at which László Kállai, chairman of the local Gypsy minority self-government, made an appearance in addition to the parents of children who have been attending the private school. A number of those present, blaming Mr Kállai for the school's closure, demanded that he leave the building. As has become public knowledge, the foundation school had its license to operate withdrawn because the settlement's representative body did not seek agreement from the local Gypsy self-government at the time it rented out part of the premises of the local authority general school to the foundation school. Kállai reckoned that something approaching a lynch mentality had built up in the community during recent days through the closure of the private school.

Parents who had enrolled their children for the current year at the Jászladány foundation school held a demonstration in the village to protest against the suspension of the school's licence to operate. One of the organisers, local resident Zsolt Bagi, made known the contents of a letter that the affected parents had written to Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy. In the letter they had expressed their opinion that suspending the school's licence to operate represented a breakdown of legality, as the law guarantees parents the right to secure the best possible schooling for their children. The letter referred to the fact that on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, when it had 205 enrolled pupils, the school still had a licence to operate, yet – in its own words – this had been rescinded by a sudden higher-level decision based on calumnies. “No one in the village has the right to determine whether anyone is of Magyar or Roma descent, if the person in question does not wish to disclose that voluntarily,” Mr Bagi quoted from the letter. “Thus, neither school can be said to be infringing on the rights of the local minority, since no register of that sort exists in the village.” Ibolya Tóth, director of the foundation school, commented that no one had been questioned about their ethnic background during enrolment, and they had accepted everyone who was prepared to meet the conditions laid down by the institution, including the payment of a monthly tuition fee of HUF 3,000 per child. She expressed the hope that the brand of operating unlawfully would soon be ‘erased’, and school would be able to operate again, in accordance with the wishes of the great majority of the village residents.

Parents who had enrolled their children at the Mihály Antal Foundation school blockaded the right-hand lane of the main road leading from Jászladány to Jászakisér with close to eighty private cars, lorries, tractors and motorbikes. This was the second demonstration that has been mounted this week by the parents, who are protesting against the withdrawal of the school's licence to operate at the end of August – on the grounds that the circumstances in which it was set up involved infringements of the law – by Szolnok County Administrative Office. In the view of the local Gypsy minority self-government, the private school is exclusive because poor – that is to say, predominantly Roma – families are unable to afford the requisite monthly tuition fee. The responsible ministry and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights have taken a similar standpoint.

Around fifty Roma residents of Paks have been forced to sleep in tents for the past two weeks after the town council condemned their dwellings as unfit for habitation and demolished them. The seven families that have been left homeless are trying to purchase homes in surrounding villages, but the inhabitants of all the communities are protesting against any Roma families moving in. As a result, owners of the properties that have been selected are calling off their sale one after the other. It is feared that those now encamped on the outskirts of Paks will not gain access to housing with modern conveniences before the onset of winter.

One of the homeless Roma families in Paks has managed to purchase a house in a nearby village. The inhabitants of four villages want to hold a demonstration against the Paks self-government, alleging that the town is seeking a solution to the fate of its own socially problematical citizens by forcing them to move out of Paks.

Villages in the area around Paks are continuing to protest against the attempt by the town to 'resettle' the still homeless Roma families of the Bedótanya neighbourhood into vacant properties within their areas. One of the families has already purchased a house in Németskér, but it is doubtful whether it will be able to take up residence there because, according to mayor, a 'lynch mob' atmosphere has developed in the village since hearing the news.

Despite opposition, the family of Károly Kolompár has managed to buy a two-bedroom house for HUF 2.5 million in the village of Németskér. The purchase price was paid to the seller by the Paks mayoral office, but the family's move into the house has not yet taken place. Mrs József Mihályi, the mayor of Németskér, a village of 1,800 inhabitants, spoke about the reasons for that in the following terms. "Németskér's residents became angry when they learned that Paks was seeking to purchase houses here for the Roma families from Bedótanya. I therefore went round the village and held discussions with the owners of ten properties that were for sale. I informed them about the general mood and advised them against selling their properties right now. All of them accepted that advice. There was

just one house owner whom I did not manage to meet, the reason for that being that he had just received the money for his house from Paks. On Thursday we called an extraordinary session of the representative body and decided that we should persuade the seller to withdraw from the transaction. We were prepared to offer him the HUF 2.5 million purchase price, even though we considered the building was not worth HUF 1 million, and if he were to be sued for breaking the contract of sale, we would even cover him for any costs that arose from that. By that point several Németskér residents had indicated that they were willing to help the local authority on this. For all our efforts to convince the seller, however, he refused to cancel the sale. On hearing that, a growing number of the village residents marched off to the house that had been sold and voiced their determination that they were not going to allow the family from Bedőtanya to move here. In the end, several hundred people gathered to protest against the Bedőtanya family's arrival, and they were not put off even by the fact that, by then, the police and riot squad reinforcements were standing guard around the house." It emerged from what the mayor said that the Paks town clerk, the leader of the county administrative office, and Aladár Horváth, chairman of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation, had been present at the scene in front of the sold house, and they too judged that the Bedőtanya family could not be allowed to move in as that would be placing themselves in personal danger. The family, which was already *en route* by then, were notified to turn back. This they duly did, whereupon the police judged that a threat was no longer present and so withdrew the uniformed presence from Németskér.

After eight o'clock that evening, however, several hundred local residents forced their way onto the property and set about demolishing the house. The police, having been summoned by radio, hastened back to the scene, but by then the roof was showing several gaping patches, several square metres in size, where tiles had been ripped off, and the building's doors and windows had been smashed. The assault has rendered the property temporarily uninhabitable. Yesterday the police tried to record evidence of the destruction, though it became clear that there was little chance of establishing, from footprints that were found in the dust, who had taken part in the demolition of the house and thus who had committed a criminal act. Detectives are not expecting the local residents to offer them any assistance in their inquiries.

It appears that the plight of the homeless Roma families from Bedőtanya is being settled, with the families being given emergency accommodation in Paks as a temporary solution. The Paks local authority arrived at this agreement after signs that surrounding villages were resorting to increasingly forceful methods to protest against any attempts by the families to move there.

On Saturday morning, some five hundred people from communities around Paks turned up in the Danube-bank town to stage a protest against the attempts to purchase



properties in their villages to house the Roma families from the town's Bedótanya neighbourhood who have been left homeless. Under the weight of the protests, Paks is now seeking other housing solutions for the families. After previously camping in tents, the Bedótanya residents have been allowed to move into brick buildings in Paks. The Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights has opened an investigation into the case.

An extraordinary meeting convoked by parents in the Jászladány community cultural centre spilled over into furious dispute. Tempers rose after Mrs Ferenc Vincze, director of the local self-government general school, announced that there was going to be no change in the division of classrooms within the school during the current school year. Thus children who had previously been enrolled in the private foundation school would continue to be taught separately from pupils of Roma background.

The Németskér self-government will buy the house that was wrecked last Thursday by village residents in protest at the purchase of the property by the Paks mayoral office to house one of the homeless Roma families from Bedótanya. The representative body of Németskér decided to buy the property and has placed the HUF 2.5 million purchase price in escrow with a solicitor. The Németskér representatives also passed a resolution that the house would be transferred to the village's Gypsy minority self-government, which intends to convert it into a community centre.

Nine Németskér residents who have no previous criminal record face the threat of possible prison sentences over their complicity in last Thursday's house-wrecking incident, claims Miklós Freppán, leader of Tolna County Administrative Office. He takes the view that the threat of prosecution could be minimized if the village were to reconsider and allow the Bedótanya Roma family, protest against whose arrival had sparked the damage to the property, to move in after all. The village's residents have rejected the proposal.

## **October**

The wife of Jászladány's mayor and other non-Roma community leaders intend to put themselves forward as Gypsy minority candidates in the local elections. Should candidates widely known to favour the establishment of the contentious local private school succeed in gaining places on the local Gypsy minority self-government, they would be in a position to consent to the renting-out of part of the village self-government general school's premises. Their candidature is legal under the law as it currently stands.

Those putting themselves forward as candidates for the Roma minority in the local elections at Jászladány include Mrs István Dankó (Dr Gabriella Makai), solicitor and wife of the town's mayor; Mrs Gellért Nagy, deputy chair of the contentious foundation

school's board of trustees; János Balogh, clerk of building works in the mayoral office; and Árpád Tolvaj, electrician and member of the Independent Smallholders' Party. Local Roma residents regard their participation in elections for the Roma minority self-government as unethical and shameful. The move was condemned in a statement made to the Roma Press Centre by László Teleki, Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister, Aladár Horváth, adviser to the prime minister, and Jenő Kaltenbach, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights. In a statement published in this newspaper on Wednesday, Flórián Farkas, the chairman of Lungo Drom, commented it was sad that the mayor's wife should wish to put herself forward as a Roma candidate in the elections for seats on the local minority self-government. Mrs István Dankó, Mrs Gellért Nagy, János Balogh and Árpád Tolvaj were legally entitled to seek election for the posts of representatives of the Gypsy minority, and all of them were officially included on the ballot alongside the other 16 Roma candidates. All of the nearly 4,000 villagers who are on the electoral roll will be able to cast their votes for the members of the local minority self-government. Under the present law, any of the thirteen national and ethnic minorities that are recognised in Hungary may establish a local minority self-government in any of the country's settlements or in any district of the capital. Candidates for seats on a local minority self-government must collect nominations from at least five registered voters, and they must undertake to represent the minority in question, but there is no requirement for them to corroborate that they actually belong to that national or ethnic minority.

The Democratic Alliance of Gypsies of Hungary has rescinded its existing agreement with Lungo Dram, led by Flórián Farkas, with immediate effect. The agreement was reached three and a half years ago and would have lasted up till this year's local elections. According to the explanation given for the break, Lungo Drom "is actively engaged to the present day in selling out the Gypsy population to the narrow interests of political parties that espouse racist principles."

"We shall defeat Lungo Drom and the personality cult on which it is built, and we are going to bring a radical change to Roma politics," promised Aladár Horváth, spokesperson for the Left-Wing Roma Solidarity at a function marking the launch of the election campaign for the recently formed grouping. The alliance would like to create an open and transparent National Gypsy Minority Self-Government.

Over the weekend, elections for 1,870 local minority self-governments were held in a total of 1,308 settlements and metropolitan districts. Under the present law, any of Hungary's thirteen recognised national and ethnic minorities may establish a local minority self-government, with more than half of these bodies being formed by Gypsies. The Roma electorate has, in addition, returned around fifty representatives to seats on the main local

self-government. According to data collected by the Ministry of the Interior, there are almost 80 settlements in which a minority-group candidate was elected as mayor, with 35 coming from the German, 20 from the Croatian, 12 from the Slovak, four each from the Roma and Slovene, and one from the Romanian community.

Under Hungarian electoral law, anyone may offer themselves as a candidate for a minority group, provided they accept the task of representing the minority in question. This is how it was possible for Mrs István Dankó (Dr Gabriella Makai), solicitor and wife of Jászladány's mayor; Mrs Gellért Nagy, deputy chair of the foundation operating a highly controversial private school in the village, János Balogh, clerk of building works in the mayor's office, and Árpád Tolvaj, a local electrician – none of whom is of Roma descent – to run as candidates and win seats as representatives of Jászladány's Gypsy minority community. The only elected representative who is genuinely of Roma descent was Mrs Rita Banyá née Suki, whom many local Gypsies now regard as a traitor.

Jenő Kaltenbach, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights, has lodged a report of suspected abuse of authority against the former mayor of Németskér in connection with the thwarted house purchase by the Roma family from the Bedőtanya neighbourhood of Paks, disclosed Dr Pál Magyar, the Tolna County public prosecutor.

There will be no re-run of local elections in Jászladány as the Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County Court has dismissed without right of appeal an electoral complaint that was lodged by László Kállai, former chairman of the Jászladány Gypsy minority self-government. The minority leader had complained that prior to the local elections a flier entitled 'Jászladány Samizdat' that was liable to be inflammatory and excite alarm had been distributed in the community and thereby influenced the outcome of the election. Kállai submitted that it had been largely due this flier that a majority of the village's inhabitants had returned representatives of non-Roma origin to seats in the local Gypsy minority self-government. The flier, which did not display the identities of its author, publisher or printer, called on the electorate, amongst other things, not to vote for "László Kállai and his group" and to oppose in every possible forum those who were obstructing the operation of the local foundation school.

"On Wednesday this week we shall see the formation of the Roma affairs council that is to be headed by Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy," László Teleki, Under-Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister, announced in Budapest. Pursuant to the government's decision, Elemér Kiss, the minister heading the Office of the Prime Minister, is to chair the new Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs, with Teleki as vice-chairman. The under-secretary of state had earlier proposed that six ministerial commissioners with responsibility for Roma affairs be appointed. The government supported the idea in principle, but in a recent resolution had not specified the ministries

where such posts were to be created (to date this has only happened within the Ministry of Education). In response to this newspaper's question, László Teleki stated that he remained confident that at least six such Roma commissioners would eventually be assisting ministries in their work.

## **November**

A police intervention on All-Saints' Day at the Pál Bugát Hospital, Gyöngyös, degenerated into a bloody *mélée*. An estimated 40-50 relatives had turned up to visit an elderly Roma woman, only to be informed on the spot that the patient had unexpectedly died. On hearing the tragic news, several family members fainted, others wept and began to wail. Someone had then called for the police, soon after which six uniformed officers appeared at the hospital. Accounts from family members and the police as to what happened next differ markedly. According to Captain József Fridrik of the Gyöngyös police department, the Roma group attacked the police officers, who acted in accordance with regulations by "breaking the group's resistance with rubber truncheons." Five members of the family were arrested and they are to be summoned for forcibly defying lawful authority. During the altercation one officer suffered injuries from which it took more than eight days to recover, two suffered minor injuries. Members of the Gypsy family, on the other hand, allege that the police officers intervened brutally from the very outset. Amongst the officers who intervened was József B., whom the Roma – in sharp contrast to the police captain – regard as an outright racist. According to them, the police officers lashed out wildly at the mourners with their truncheons, and were rough in pushing women and children down the stairs from the third floor. One of the dead woman's sons was beaten up whilst handcuffed to a door in the hospital. His wife, who hastened to her husband's defence, was grabbed by the hair and thrown to the floor. According to the account of the relatives, one police officer went so far as to draw his weapon and yell "I'll blow you to bits, stinking Gypsies!" One family member alleges that several of the five Roma men who were arrested had subsequently received further beatings from police officers, with two of them requiring hospital treatment.

The statutory meeting of the Jászladány Roma minority self-government yesterday, at the village's cultural centre, lasted altogether thirty minutes. The five-person body, which has four non-Roma and one Roma member, offered no debate or dissent in deciding on the choice of chairperson and representatives, and in agreeing to form two committees. Mrs Rita Banyá née Suki, the sole member of the local minority self-government who is of Gypsy descent, was elected chairperson of the body, whilst Mrs Gellért Nagy, deputy chair of the foundation that has established a private school in the village, will be her deputy. Mrs István Dankó (Dr Gabriella Makai), solicitor and wife of Jászladány's mayor, who received the most votes in the election for the minority self-government, was

unwilling to accept a leading position. Following the meeting, Mrs Banyá said that they wished to work together with the village's self-government and would be concentrating mainly on educational issues. She added that they were in agreement that the private school, formation of which had stirred up a huge storm, should be allowed to operate, but their business as a body was to urge the raising of educational standards at the local authority general school.

More Roma politicians than ever before have acquired the right to participate as electors in the voting for a new National Gypsy Minority Self-Government. The total number could be as high as five thousand. The Roma electors will have to prepare themselves for a protracted voting procedure that may stretch out until dawn.

The two previous elections for places on the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government were won by Lungo Drom, and there was a fair chance of success the third time round. In December 2001, Flórián Farkas, chairman of the NGMSG and of Lungo Drom, had concluded an electoral pact with the right-wing parties that, in the end, had lost this year's parliamentary elections; however, it is highly questionable whether the Roma opposition groups are strong enough to exploit that weakness and take over control of the NGMSG.

Aladár Horváth is to be the Left-Wing Roma Solidarity's candidate for chairmanship of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government in the election due to be held this January, the organisation – which is seeking to replace Lungo Drom – has announced.

Left-Wing Roma Solidarity was formed a few months ago by nine Gypsy organisations. This new grouping has determined that its paramount goals are to win the elections for the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government and secure the dismissal of Lungo Drom under Flórián Farkas, its leader. In both previous elections, Lungo Drom and its coalition partners obtained all 53 seats on the NGMSG, and there is a serious chance that this will be repeated. An overwhelming majority of the delegates, or 'electors', who will be taking part in the forthcoming election in January are people who gained seats as Roma candidates in local minority self-governments or in mainstream local self-governments, and it was candidates put up by Lungo Drom who gained more seats in these bodies than any other Gypsy organisation. Left-Wing Roma Solidarity, moreover, is being weakened by internal disputes, whilst a number of leading members of the two largest organisations that make up the grouping have gone over to Lungo Drom. As a result, Left-Wing Roma Solidarity has suspended cooperation with the two organisations in question, the Forum of Gypsy Organisations of Hungary and the National Association of Gypsy Organisations. It will serve as only partial compensation for this painful loss that the Democratic Alliance of Gypsies of Hungary, which has hitherto give no clear indication of which camp it supports, has joined the left-wing Roma alliance.

A Jász Region Roma Civil Rights Organisation, founded in a tavern in Jászládány, has set itself the target of improving the situation of Gypsies living within the area. It plans to set up a Roma community centre in the village, from which it would be possible to offer legal aid and other services, one of the founders reported.

“After the Ministry of Education, it is expected that the next commissioner for Roma affairs will begin work on 1<sup>st</sup> January,” announced László Teleki, Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister, following the first session to be held by the Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs since the hand-over of government.

## **December**

“The integration of Gypsies into Hungarian society has to get under way without delay,” László Teleki, Under-Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister, underscored in an address at Szolnok. Speaking about the achievements of the first six months in his post, at a forum for leaders of local Roma minority self-governments organised by the Society for the Protection of Minority Rights, Teleki highlighted the establishment of the Council for Roma Affairs, the overall boost in scholarship funding that was available for Gypsy students, and the creation of posts with responsibility for Roma affairs within individual ministries. The under-secretary of state categorised the institution of a department responsible for equal opportunities within the Ministry of Employment Policy and Labour, whose main task is to work out programmes for promoting long-term employment for those in the Roma community, amongst the measures being taken to improve quality of life for Gypsies. Mr Teleki said that it was planned that ideas for programmes to assist the Roma community in catching up with the rest of society, which would be broken down by ministry, with proposals for appropriate funding and designating those who would hold specific responsibility, would be laid before the cabinet for consideration in February. He emphasized that in the coming year of 2003 the Public Foundation for the Gypsies of Hungary would be funded to the tune of HUF 1,100 million – a sum three times greater than previously – whilst the sums available for handling emergency situations and for the support of Gypsy culture would also be going up.

Both the Ministry of Education and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights have begun investigations in the village of Pátka, just north of Székesfehérvár in Fejér County, where, almost without exception, Roma children who attend the general school have been declared mentally subnormal and streamed into separate classes, not only for teaching purposes but even during the lunch period, and indeed until the Ombudsman launched his investigation, even had a separate set of plastic tableware. Community leaders claim that the residents of Pátka hold one another in respect, and there had been no trouble until outsiders began interfering in the village’s life. Roma residents,

however, have the feeling that the only thing they can count on from the local authority is that it will cover the costs for an abortion or insertion of a coil for birth control.

To mark Minorities Day, Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy handed out Prizes for Minorities in the Parliament building. President Ferenc Mádl and Katalin Szili, Speaker of the House, also took part in the event. Prizes were awarded to Dénes Berényi, academician and first chairman of the Apáczai Public Foundation; Mrs Gábor Husznai (née Ida Hambuch), head of the German national section at the Klára Leöwy High School, Pécs; János Joka Daróczi, editor of the Roma magazine programme for Hungarian Television; István Mezei, instigator of the Hungarian Gypsy Football Team; as well as the editorial team producing the Transylvanian Hungarian Etymological Word-Stock, the Martenica Folk Dance Ensemble, and a representative for the János Selye College, Komárom. The prime minister said it was necessary to provide for parliamentary representation of minorities, and there needed to be arrangements to ensure that only those belonging to a given ethnic group were able to sit in local minority self-governments. He considered support for integration of the Roma populace to be one of most important social issues facing the country.

One of the reasons for the poor social status of Gypsies is to be sought in the disadvantages they suffer in schooling, whilst those disadvantages may be at least partially explicable by the fact that a significant proportion of Roma children receive no, or only very limited, nursery education. Delphoi Consulting, an advisory and research firm, has conducted a study of nursery education of Roma children. Their survey showed that the smaller the nursery, and the smaller the settlement in which it is situated, the greater the likelihood that there will be a high proportion of Roma children. Higher-than-average numbers of Gypsies live in settlements where there is no nursery provision at all, according to the investigation. In the event that a nursery's capacity is not fully utilised, it is able to accept Roma children at a young age; conversely, the greater the pressure on nursery places, the older the age of the Gypsy children that it is able to accept. It follows that the proportion of Roma children receiving nursery education could be raised by increasing the capacity of nurseries. Fewer than two-thirds of Roma children complete their general education by the time they reach the age when compulsory schooling ends. Those who continue their studies do so primarily in vocational training institutions that do not offer marketable skills. As compared with the average for Hungary, merely one-sixth of young Roma students enter a training scheme leading to a secondary-school diploma (*érettségi*), whilst the chances that they will enter a high school to continue their studies are one-fortieth of those for non-Roma students.