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### **The Present and Future Prospects of Hungarian Higher Education in Romania<sup>1</sup>**

The survey of Hungarian higher education institutions, types of training and specialisation in Romania was compiled before the end of 2003. Partly because of its findings and partly in the light of the general quantitative and qualitative features of Hungary education in Romania, it is timely and necessary to draw the attention of the Romanian and Hungarian bodies and responsible officials concerned to the alarming symptoms of the present situation and certain, already perceptible future trends. At the same time, the author wishes to propose for consideration urgent steps and decisions that might be able to prevent further unfavourable developments.

The first version of the survey did not aim at comprehensiveness: it did not cover (nearly) absent but necessary specialisations, postgraduate (masters and Ph.D.) training, the workshops and institutions of scientific research, the infrastructure, or the support institutions. Yet, enough data is available on them from the descriptions of the given institutions to make it safe to comment on their content-related and professional problems. The author is aware that the opinion set out here, although makes an effort to be objective, is surely not free of subjectivity, mistakes, or deficiencies. However, the only purpose of this study is to start off a discussion and hopefully inspire favourable processes in harmony with the interests of the community. Recent accomplishments and the undeniable expansion are mentioned neither in detail nor ostentatiously. Yet, this does not mean that they are disregarded and should not suggest that the generous work and exceptional merits of some of our colleagues and a few public figures is not acknowledged.

As this study aims at pointing out orders of magnitude, proportions, content and quality indicators, and perceptible trends, no references are made to the publicly available accurate and detailed statistical figures and sources. Furthermore, the study focuses on internal processes and phenomena by analysing the responsibilities and opportunities of the heads, officials, and professors of the Hungarian institutions instead of trying to find excuses and answers in educational policy in general. By doing so, it seeks to make up for the nearly total absence of analyses of similar character. The ones available usually provide detailed descriptions but pay little attention at processes and problems. And, from among the causes, they normally refer to two – demographic decrease and Romanian educational policy – which people often acknowledge with a sense of fatalism and thereby turning out of our reach.

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<sup>1</sup> The paper was presented in a lecture introducing a discussion at the meeting of the heads of Hungarian higher educational institutions in Kolozsvár (Cluj Napoca) on 5 March 2004.

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### Analysis of the present situation

1. The institutional network, considered Hungarian higher-education network in Romania on the basis of the dominant language of education, is extremely heterogeneous with respect to the institutions' status, size, traditions, professional weight, financing, and other factors. It is undoubtedly a positive development that, although with delay, the wave of differentiation and the increasingly more mass educational character of European higher education have appeared within this network. This was due not to natural economic and social demands but primarily to freedom – that one was free at last to leave the narrow frameworks and the pressure of the centralized and ideological state control behind. The disappearance of exclusive state control over education is a wonderful experience and opportunity for minority communities but it does not offset the deficiency or failure deriving from the unsuccessful efforts to establish an independent Hungarian public university. One can only regret how much the implicitly accepted principle of the foundation of new institutions has been damaged. According to it, a new specialisation should remedy a deficiency and, therefore, have a complementary character; furthermore, the new features should not weaken the already established positions. Unfortunately, this principle has been ignored in practice.

The network's general feature is the uncertain and vulnerable situation of its institutions: the network has acquired a status neither legally, neither in permanent professional accreditation nor in the budget which could ensure its relative independence. Naturally, university and institutional autonomy is not of an absolute character anywhere, but, in this respect, Hungarian higher educational institutions in Romania are much below any desirable standard. This greatly restricts the scope for action and reduces their responsibilities of the heads of institutions. In public institutions, basic level financing is relatively secure but this means less independence from the mother institution and, professionally, from the Romanian colleagues. Although financing is of a higher level in foundation, ecclesiastic institutions and institutions of other status, it is also uncertain. Moreover, since this financing is of a political background and mediation, the teachers are exposed to political influence and ecclesiastic control, which can also influence professional choices and assessment. Uncertainty and vulnerability are also enhanced in these institutions by the ongoing accreditation process of faculties and institutions, and the difficulties of obtaining a licence for launching specialisations and courses. This provisional character might even encourage quality in the framework of rule of law free from ideological prejudice, but in view of the Romanian circumstances, it is more of a demoralizing factor.

2. Parallel to the dramatic expansion of higher education, Hungarian public education is in a steady regress. Despite the expansion of the institutional structure, the improvement of the status of Hungarian education and the continuous assistance from Hungary, the percentage of students doing a Hungarian secondary

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school-leaving examination dropped below the national average in the second half of the 1990s. In the early 1990s, the Hungarian population in Transylvania was first among the Romanian ethnic minorities in this respect (and 9th as regards university qualification), while today little more than 40% of the students reach this level (note that this is a percentage value, which is in no relation with the demographic decrease!). Due to this drop, the number of those who do the secondary school-leaving examination in Hungarian (about 6000) has approached the admissions margin of higher education, so there is no chance for a quantitative expansion of higher education in the next 3–4 years. Therefore, the reserves of qualitative development also become scanty in lack of a selective background.<sup>2</sup> At present, approximately 30–40% of the Hungarian-speaking students in higher education (about 8–10,000 students out of 25,000) receive Hungarian-language education in this framework. Despite the striking expansion of the past years, this percentage, when compared to international figures, is very low: it is not only far below the Finnish, the international front runners, but also Hungarian figures. (Hungary has about 10 million inhabitants, out of which 400,000 people study in higher education. This would infer not 25,000 students in the case of the 1.5 million Transylvanian Hungarians that we have at present, but 60,000 students at least. As for the Romanian proportions: in the 2001–2002 school year 570,000 people studied in higher education out of a population of 22 million. This proportion would correspond to 40,000 higher education students in the case of the Hungarian minority. The shortfall is therefore 15,000 as compared to the Romanian and 35,000 to the Hungarian average. Let's put this differently: the number of students in higher education is 40 for every 1000 inhabitants in Hungary, 26 in Romania and 15.5 among the Hungarian minority in Romania.)<sup>3</sup> This obvious shortfall indicates fewer opportunities at home, and motivates many young people, especially those who live close to the border, to continue their studies in Hungary.

One must not forget what experiences also reveal: one fourth of the young people go on to the institutions of Hungarian higher education every year. Yet, this not necessarily the best one fourth, since the continuation of one's studies is currently motivated not by abilities and personal ambition but by money and family background.

<sup>2</sup> According to a statistical figure (not verified by the author), the number of those who could have made it into the institutions of Hungarian higher education at the 2003 entrance exams exceeded that of those who passed the school-leaving exam in Hungarian in the same year. This is plausible, since there are distance learning courses and further education that usually attract graduates. There are others (and, hopefully, there will be increasingly more of them) who do the school-leaving exam in Romanian and continue the university in Hungarian, and still others who enrol to the Hungarian department of e.g. the Babeş–Bolyai University without knowing any Hungarian (however, this involves the danger of the department losing its Hungarian character linguistically, which would damage its very substance).

<sup>3</sup> The figures on Romania were published by the Ministry of Education in: *The present time in the education of national minorities in Romania. Achievements in the 2001–2002 school year and perspectives* (10–11. p.).

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In addition, there is another essential figure: there are about 600 teachers in Hungarian higher education but, due to their young age or the discriminative character of the system, only less than half of them have some scientific record (usually a Ph.D. degree).<sup>4</sup> The professional recognition of Hungarian teachers is all the more difficult because the system, which, in conformity with European standards, is becoming increasingly standardized in Romania with respect to the assessment of publications, almost completely ignores Hungarian-language periodicals and publishers. This is especially disadvantageous for young researchers in the fields with the greatest number of Hungarian-language publications: in humanities and social sciences.

The small community of teachers is constrained to commute because of the low and unequal wages and unnecessary duplication, which also loosens educational discipline. Therefore, one can already conclude that the former positions of Hungarian higher education weakened parallel to or as a result of expansion. This is a negative phenomenon not only because of the overwork and commuting required of the teaching staff but also because it leads to overproduction at certain faculties entailing potential difficulties of retraining to related fields in future.

**3.** Despite its remarkable expansion, differentiation, and diversification, the Hungarian-language education is still extremely restricted and distorted with respect to its selection of faculties. This is one of the reasons why the majority of Hungarian youth are still constrained to study in Romanian. Most striking are the deficiencies that persist in agrarian specialisations, and in the fields of economy, law, and engineering. Due to the distorted nature of the present range of faculties, the situation of natural sciences is on the decline as well. Regarding the fields of theology, humanities, pedagogy and health care, the range of faculties is relatively full. Oversupply and quantitatively excessive training can emerge in certain fields, which can truly become a risk factor if a student only takes up one major. In general, the situation is better in branches that offer prospects of a less secure livelihood as opposed to the fields that ensure one more security socially and professionally.

**4.** The present institutional network, which under no circumstances can be considered a system, has evolved through the political decisions and local initiatives in a way that professional considerations hardly had a chance to get across. Furthermore, due to a lack of institutional autonomy, this network is still easily influ-

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<sup>4</sup> Decline and the weakening of positions continued in certain public institutions. At the Kolozsvár Art Academy, where one third of the students are Hungarian, a Hungarian department would have had great prospects ten years ago. Out of the former 70 Hungarian professors it only has 5 at present. At the Music Academy, with the retirement of renowned Hungarian professors, there are only one or two young Hungarian teachers left. The former position of the Hungarian faculty (mainly including professors) at the Medical University in Marosvásárhely (Targu Mures) has eroded, and the signs of decline can be demonstrated and perceived at the Babeş-Bolyai University as well.

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enced and manipulated from the outside. The forums of various levels express the interests of the individual institutions, groups of professors, or local lobby groups. At the same time, no body exists that would impartially represent overall professional requirements, the prospective demands of the ethnic community and the interests of the youth and their parents, and formulate all these in the form of recommendations. Minimum control and the lack of coordination or, at least, wise insights, results in a general frittering away of intellectual and educational resources in duplications in training of dubious value. Based on the above-mentioned survey on higher education, the institutional and training framework of teacher training seems absolutely chaotic (training is conducted at distant learning and correspondence courses, at the Romanian public university which has no Hungarian department, at the levels of secondary and tertiary education, in one- or two-major systems, in seven cities and at ten institutions). Unfortunately, it is real substance that gets lost in this chaotic abundance: the thorough training of kindergarten and primary school teachers for a most exacting teaching career. The consequences of this situation can already be felt in so far as students lack most necessary knowledge and skills in orthography, creative writing, and reading comprehension. At the same time, the choice of fashionable courses offered in several institutions (and, occasionally, in a one major system), such as public relations and communication, seems accidental and, with respect to the future of the students, risky. The author believes it is unjustified to make certain elite fields, such as philosophy and sociology, part of mass education and offer them at several institutions (or even at distance learning courses!). It should be considered whether the introduction of the one-major system is desirable in journalism and political science.

Parallel structures are also present in the operation of support institutions. According to the author, it was not necessarily wise to establish an independent lecture note publisher at Sapientia, when such a workshop has been successfully operating and supplying every higher education institution in the framework of the Transylvanian Textbook Council (Erdélyi Tankönyvtanács). Furthermore, research workshops, "institutes", and other support institutions related to higher education are also scattered almost beyond comprehension. From this chaotic situation, "suspicious" groups and manoeuvring individuals can profit, while the professionally trustworthy workshops have only to lose. The support institutions that, parallel to the Bolyai Társaság, have undertaken the mediation of assistance available for the Hungarian instructors of public universities through tenders, are increasingly becoming each others' rivals.

**5.** Consequently, the individual regional centres narrow-mindedly compete each other, many outside "guardians" interfere unwarranted in the everyday life of the institutions, the foundation schools confront public universities, unnecessary parallelisms are created, and there is rash "overproduction" of graduates in certain fields that do not offer competitive skills for real life. The gradually evolving multi-

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polarity of higher education establishes the foundations of an unhealthy professional rivalry, which, in turn, leads to elbowing. Increasingly more would like to have a share of the available financial sources, external or internal budgetary appropriations, and assistance. However, money pushes the rational professional considerations into the background, it weakens what it should, in fact, strengthen, it produces significant and unjustified disproportionateness in the wages, and lures even the most sober of people to do things that cause harm to the common cause. Rashness and the dissipation of intellectual capacities results in an irrational use of the scarce financial resources, rivalry instead of healthy competition, allurements instead of the appreciation of the teaching staff, servility instead of the performance oriented motivation of the students, and feudal respect for authority instead of open mentality. The lack of discipline and responsibility is primarily related to these phenomena, which have been on the mind of the Hungarian public opinion in Romania for some time with good reason. These developments can devalue Hungarian higher education with respect to that available in Hungary or in Romanian.

**6.** As a development, one could justifiably call historic, the new higher educational institutions have produced intellectual urbanization in some regions and townships important for Hungarian language and culture. However, it is still unsure and dubious how the faculties and departments of the geographically far institutional units will be successfully set up. The arrangement and running of the professional and personal relations and the internal university network seems an even more complicated task. The less centralised character of Hungarian higher education can bring about the provincialisation of the new institutions, which can have far-reaching consequences. Opinions and efforts questioning the central role of Kolozsvár are increasingly prevalent, with some preferring to establish the new centre of Hungarian higher education in Transylvania in Marosvásárhely. An independent public university in Kolozsvár could have been a true institutional and intellectual centre. It seems that, in lack of independent departments, the present university in Kolozsvár will perform this role increasingly less, while, for Sapiaentia, it is a problem in itself just to overcome its own internal problems. Unprincipled and rash rivalry can further disarrange institutional relations.

**7.** As regards Hungarian higher education in Romania as a whole, it is rather alarming that primarily and to an increasing extent external factors determine the choice of profession and specialisation of the youth: the courses offered by the local institution, the easiness of being admitted (preferably without an entrance examination), a chance for a diploma with little intellectual effort and at the lowest possible cost, the fashionable character of a given specialisation, etc. Fundamental factors, such as the skills and interests of the student, or the security of livelihood that a specialisation can offer, have become secondary. Due to this, there were no Hungarian applicants in the past years for such important majors (or

major combinations) as physics–chemistry, biochemistry, and mathematics–physics. Moreover, although these have an excellent educational background, closing them down has become a real possibility. The “emergency measure” applied in 2003, the enrolment of a few students who do not speak Hungarian at the Hungarian department in Kolozsvár, entails different risks.

Right now it is obvious that not the principles of demand and supply determine development. Instead, distorted supply and local training opportunities drive the students toward forced paths. Hardly any apply to the more difficult natural science majors, which would, however, offer great career prospects. At the same time, there are masses enrolling to the softer social science majors or those that promise some kind of a “missionary” activity with respect to their own communities. There are more general questions, which concern higher education in Romania as a whole: to what extent will the diplomas obtained in the present system be authentic and equivalent to others, and what opportunities can the acquired knowledge ensure amongst the competitive circumstances of market economy?

### **Expected development of external factors and conditions**

Apart from educational policy, which is expected to be unpredictable in the next five years, Hungarian education in Romania as a whole, including higher education, might have one more, perhaps last chance due to the following changes:

1. Ten-grade education, which is soon to become obligatory, can improve the situation of public education as a whole. It can help decrease the drop-out rate, increase the prestige of education and knowledge, and can significantly improve the proportion of students who do a secondary school-leaving exam. This latter figure should reach Hungary’s 70% rate and, despite the demographic bottom, thereby increase the number of students applying to tertiary institutions by 3–4,000 students per year. This pool can be a main quantitative and qualitative reserve for higher education.

2. Another factor that might improve the prestige of education and learning is the educational assistance that, in compliance with the Status Law, is due to every student studying in Hungarian. Assistance programmes and tenders that were announced for talented students in a disadvantageous situation socially and as regards their linguistic environment can also be encouraging.

3. In accordance with international expectations, the general structural reform of higher education takes place in conformity with the common European model: the institutions will have to comply with an evolving multi-stage education.

The creation of great integrated structures is expected in certain centres in the near future, and the place and relative autonomy of Hungarian institutions will have to be found within these. This can influence – threaten or improve – the situa-

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tion of the institutions of the most important centres: Kolozsvár, Marosvásárhely, and Nagyvárad (Oradea).

The standardization of the assessment system of publications is also likely to continue. The chances for publication in Hungary, as they count as international publications, can be an advantage. At the same time, however, the prestige of publishers and periodicals in Romania and the value of their publications can diminish if the responsible Romanian forum rejects them.

**4.** Accession to the European Union can have an enormous impact. Its influence will be felt in Hungary starting from 2004, and, as Hungarian higher education in Romania depends on that of the mother country to a great extent, the changes will affect several Hungarian minority regions. Romania is also expected to join the EU in a few years, which will bring about further positive and negative consequences. It is likely that studying and, even more so, working and living in Hungary and the EU will become more attractive to the young people. Furthermore, it cannot be ignored that competition caused by foreign and not easily accessible higher educational institutions in the European area or their branches in Romania will intensify and become more open.

### **Vision and strategy**

Strategy planning and the formulation of a vision is not the duty of this paper. However, the interests of the national community, the youth and our future make it urgent for us to outline both strategy and vision with an understanding of each other's opinion. Or, at least, with an effort to cooperation. Not the far away future is what counts here. When we refer to the pressing of time, it is not because of the advanced age of my generation. We do not have such a hard time any more. But, with the expected twists and turns, the young people, our children, will not find it easy at all to strike roots and stay here.

It is useless and pointless to talk about strategy if we consider everything that happens to us as an act of fate of minority life. Moreover, it is advisable to separate the problems that can be dealt with relatively autonomously (e.g. the question of quality) from those that would require a comprehensive transformation on the level of national educational policy and from those that derive from the even more general European and integration processes. This new approach entails that we cannot continue to assign responsibility to others.

**1.** The present situation justifies the question: What is the reason for the basically general lack of coordination and planning in the development and operation of Hungarian higher education? Everything suggests that we dragging along the chaotic "development" path with a delay of five or six years, characteristic of the whole of Romanian higher education. The only difference is that in our case there is no authority or forum from which one could expect professionalism and the rep-

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resentation of common interests. (This is evidently not in the interest of the Romanian educational authority, while the existing Hungarian bodies of educational policy are powerless individually.) One has the feeling that the decisions, which in the end proved to be long-term ones and, at times, tragic, have been determined exclusively with an eye to local interests or the interests of individuals, groups, or current policy. There has been no reaction whatsoever to the well-meaning and repeated calls for coordination by the Bolyai Society and the Centurion Society. The heads of institutions could only be brought around for continuous consultation and coordination by a respected professional body, which, independent of all interests, would play a supervisory role with its opinions and recommendations, and would have enough weight to influence both the decision-makers and supporters in Hungary and the key figures of Hungarian higher education in Romania. In the processes toward mass education and differentiation, the preservation of quality is a general problem in European higher educational institutions. The integration initiatives, the introduction of the credit system, the accreditation requirements and quality control, and the adoption and observation of common models all aim at ensuring quality.

The institutional system of higher education in Romania can only be developed as a whole. Every new idea should be coordinated with the existing structures, and uniformly high standards should be established for both teaching staff and students. Otherwise, in lack of continuous coordination and wise consideration, it becomes a real risk that Hungarian higher education in Transylvania is relegated into complete provincialism.

2. The development and effectiveness of the true autonomy of universities has to be promoted, the financial stability of the institutions has to be ensured, and the important, high-level quality faculties and courses have to be assisted in every possible way so that they could obtain the security offered by accreditation. However, any effort is hopeless as long as the principle behind today's insecurity is observed, that is: anybody who provides financial assistance can interfere in the operation of the institutions. It is of utmost importance to have solid and relatively autonomous university institutional units (departments, faculties, independent universities). However, none of this can be achieved without effective political guidance.<sup>5</sup>

It requires further preparations to prevent any damage to Hungarian higher that the upcoming national introduction of the new university model may entail. Hungarian higher education should be able to obtain and maintain its due positions in

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<sup>5</sup> Recent elections at Babeş-Bolyai University demonstrated clearly that, in relation to autonomous faculties, the scattered departmental groups (and even the departments) are in a disadvantageous situation when it comes to representation. It was also proved that the years-long common efforts of the teaching staff aiming at autonomous faculties can become uncertain in a second in lack of solid institutional structures.

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undergraduate and the postgraduate master and Ph.D. programmes as well. It is to be assumed – not on the basis of resentful suspicion but on that of past experiences – that, under the new system, the Romanian educational authority will attempt to limit Hungarian higher education to undergraduate programmes. It is also a question whether Hungarian families will be able to bear the costs associated with the multi-stage system and the increasingly more general tuitions across Europe. In order to offset this, the master and Ph.D. schools (2nd and 3rd stage) should be designed well in advance. Evidently, this requires more than the efforts and well intentions of those concerned: the effective assistance of educational policy will also be indispensable. Autonomy and modernization are two challenges that can be better met jointly than separately by the institutions.

3. As a long term but gradually obtainable objective, the proportion of Hungarian students doing the school-leaving exam needs to be increased. It should reach 70% per class, with at least two thirds falling to Hungarian public education (given that many continue to study in Romanian). However, since these efforts can only show results in the long term, the number and percentage of the students doing the school-leaving exam is not expected to grow in the next 3–4 years. Not so much in quantitative as in qualitative development, the opportunities of higher education of the close future are connected with the level of public education, the non-obligatory framework of the secondary school cycle, and the prevailing (or not prevailing) policy of equal opportunities. Starting out from these considerations:

a) It is fundamental to raise the standard of Hungarian public education: the lack or inferior level of the first few grades can make the pupils and the parents opt for Romanian education. Primary schools have to be maintained in diaspora and small villages even if the number of children is low. This is essential regarding the future of a given locality.<sup>6</sup> Not only the foundation and opening of new schools have to be made public prior to the beginning of the school year, but the list of closing classes, grades and schools. In each of these cases, the causes and the responsibility of the parties and persons involved have to be examined.

The continuous internal assessment (independent of the educational authority) of the individual Hungarian institutions on the basis of jointly established objective criteria is just as desirable as the publication of the assessment results. This would inform the parents, provide incentives for assistance, and inspire the teaching staff of the schools.

b) Regular talent scouting and talent promotion is needed in the lower grades (in rural neighbourhoods as well!) in the framework of the national school system. The public mood and this system should encourage and assist young

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<sup>6</sup> The closing down of a school can entail the abandonment of the village. Therefore, in this sense, its consequences are comparable to those of the conscious destruction of villages.

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talents and lay an emphasis on the importance of knowledge and learning. A cult of knowledge has to be popularised.

The mother tongue foundations of Hungarian education, the solid place of the Hungarian language among the subjects, and a favourable regard for it are essential conditions for improving the standards. The attitude, which considers not the Romanian language but the basic mother tongue knowledge and culture a burden at school, and seeks to alleviate it, can prove to be catastrophic. As an absurd outcome of this process, one can receive ethnic Hungarian education that is not conducted in Hungarian.

- c) It is indispensable to raise the standard of teacher training. For this, suitability requirements have to be taken into account and students have to receive high quality theoretical, especially psychopedagogic and methodological training. The situation of teacher training has to be sorted out as soon as possible, taking the following path: it should be taught full-time in colleges, in a one-major system, with a more limited number of participating institutions and students.
- d) It is a task primarily of local self-governments and the county educational authorities to make the teaching profession attractive in the rural environment by ensuring appropriate circumstances, and to provide assistance to the local school and the local teachers' community.
- e) The professional and financial assistance of schools that have a Hungarian faculty and diaspora education requires fundamental improvements.

4. The professional body that is to be set up has to analyse the entire existing institutional network: the indicated unnecessary parallelisms, the deficiencies present in the use of intellectual and financial resources, the phenomena of over-supply and undersupply in certain fields, the (nearly) absent but necessary specialisations both in the undergraduate and graduate stages. A survey of (nearly) absent but necessary majors has to be prepared as soon as possible, possibly also indicating which majors taught in Romanian attract Hungarian-speaking youth the most. It would be important to know in detail the actual situation of the majors that are "endangered" despite an appropriate professional background. Similarly, the present opportunities of the master and Ph.D. courses also need to be surveyed (taught not necessarily in Hungarian but by professors who presumably do not discriminate against Hungarian applicants).

Based on the surveys, the responsible body would elaborate its recommendations and strategy as regards future developments covering the following: the rational and resolute basic rearrangement of the present institutional system; the proportion of important courses, elite courses and courses that provide secure livelihood; the assessment of the demands and possibilities of development (demand meaning interests determining the future of the community and not personal ambitions); the rational and pragmatic ranking of all the things that need to be done, etc.

This body should take a stand on discipline and responsibility by elaborating a code of ethics for the teaching staff.

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**5.** Strategy and an effective higher educational system entail one more requirement. This is a condition related to minority policy which determines the situation and the future of the whole minority community: equal opportunities have to be ensured to young Hungarian graduates by providing them posts – appropriate to their qualifications, in accordance with a quota based on the size of the community, and without any restriction and discrimination – in the Romanian higher educational, scientific, cultural, financial, and public administration institutions, decision-making bodies, and the state administration. The disproportionateness that derives from the dominant position of the majority population in the state institutions should end, since, in many cases, not necessarily financial pull factors but the lack of domestic prospects leads to migration.

**6.** By stressing the need for coordination, we do not argue for centralization. However, we believe that the institutional network can fall apart without a strong base institution. One of the basic objectives of strategy would be not a centralised but a coordinated and harmonised network, which might even operate as a whole of institutions joined together. This paper does not aim at inspiring a debate on which city should host this base institution. It is maybe not due merely to local bias that we believe that intellectually, linguistically, and professionally Kolozsvár continues to offer the most to the Hungarian students who study in Transylvania. However, should Kolozsvár want to remain an intellectual centre with its university atmosphere, scientific institutions, and current professors, the Hungarian character of Kolozsvár needs to be made more attractive. This requires a cosy centre, a dormitory that could be regarded as a second home, where Hungarian students studying at different universities could gather together. It could help the students with foreign language courses, IT services, a reference library, or even with social assistance.

No doubt, the next years will bring new tests and temptations. Significant changes are expected in the life of the institutions and in that of the whole community. However, the fundamental question will persist: what can we offer to the new generations of Hungarian youth in Transylvania, and what can Romanian higher education and the world offer to them?

Those present at the meeting of 5 March 2004 agreed that

1. there is need for continuous consultation and coordination between the heads of institutions;
2. the present paper and the minutes recording the ensuing debate have to be sent out to all heads of institution (especially to those not present), and the head of the various educational bodies;
3. the material has to be published;
4. consultations need to start with academic forums in Hungary on the establishment of an independent advisory council.