

Commissioner Mr. Franco **FRATTINI**
Vice President of the European Commission
European Commission
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

Oxford, June 27, 2007

Dear Commissioner Frattini,

Numerous European non-governmental organizations fight against infringement of human rights in various countries worldwide. Therefore, it is absurd and anachronistic that in 21st century Europe, Romanian academic leaders, enjoying full support of the Romanian diplomacy, lead a war against basic minority rights of which all major national communities of Europe may benefit – except for Hungarians in Romania.

Swedes in Finland, Hungarians in Slovakia, Germans in South-Tyrol, Gagauz in Moldova, Albanians in Macedonia, Catalans in Spain and other larger minorities benefit of fully developed education systems, from kindergarten to university, where students can freely study in their mother tongue¹. Hungarians in Romania, some 1.5 million people, make up for 6.6% of the population, are severely under-represented in the higher education: official statistics show that only 4.4% of the students in Romania are ethnic Hungarian, out of which a mere 1.6% may study in their mother tongue at universities in Romania².

One of the reasons for the underrepresentation is that the discrimination of Hungarian students starts at the Romanian language tests in secondary school³, whereas several disciplines in the higher education may not be studied in the Hungarian language. This is all the more obtrusive as there are European countries with a population smaller than the number of Hungarians in Romania.

Hungarians in Romania have been fighting since the Revolution in 1989, without any result, for the re-establishment of the publicly-funded, Hungarian-language “Bolyai” University, which was abolished in 1959. In 1995, the Romanian Parliament did not even debate the petition on minority education supported with 500,000 signatures collected aiming, among others, at the re-establishment of the “Bolyai” University, despite the fact that any initiative supported by 200,000 citizens should be put on the agenda of the Parliament. In 1998, the MPs of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania forwarded two drafts to the Romanian Parliament to support the re-establishment of the publicly-funded, Hungarian-language university, which were eventually rejected after 3 years of evasions. In 2004, the political efforts to create the Hungarian faculties at the “Babes-Bolyai” University also failed.

Due to the subsequent rejections, Hungary had to create the Hungarian language “Sapientia” University, which operates in cities around Transylvania. This is a university, which educates Romanian citizens, but does not benefit from the support of the Romanian state. Thus, it may be seen as cynical when Romanian politicians often declare that the Romanian state generously funds higher education for its minorities.

We had to face the same humiliating and dismissive attitude in those higher education institutions where Hungarian teachers and students have still remained after the changes in 1989. The decision-making bodies of these institutions, having Romanian majority, have done all in their powers to block the creation of the Hungarian faculties, which would have allowed for the development and improvement of the higher education for our minority. The petitions demanding the creation of the Hungarian faculties have been signed several times by 80% of the relevant teachers of the “Babes-Bolyai” University⁴ and the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Marosvásárhely / Targu-Mures⁵, however, the university decision-making bodies have not even taken them into discussion.

The high-level support given to nationalist and anti-minority pursuit is best reflected by the efforts made by the Romanian diplomacy and, sadly, by some MEPs to build a positive image of the rather tensed Romanian situation. In November 2006, the “Babes-Bolyai” University, whose decision-makers denied the organization of Hungarian faculties, where the Hungarian language cannot be used in the formal institutional administrative procedures, where there is almost exclusively Romanian signage, where almost no middle-level Hungarian managers exist, and where ethnic Hungarian deputy rectors are elected by bodies with Romanian majority from Hungarian teaching staff willing to collaborate with them, *organized an exhibition at the European Parliament, and did not refrain from disseminating lies, only to advertise its non-existent multiculturalism*: for instance, that the university signage is multilingual⁶.

On the very day when this exhibition was opened I placed Hungarian inscriptions (*e.g. No smoking*) on the premises of the “Babes-Bolyai” University. A few weeks later, I and my colleague, Lehel Kovács, who had not even been there, were fired, and the “multicultural” management of the University reported us at the police. There was an important effort going on to break and intimidate the Hungarian teachers and students. The management tried mostly to prevent actions of collective expression of opinion: while we were collecting signatures, we had to face hindrance reminiscent of the methods of the secret services.

Romania has dragged a series of unsolved minority issues with itself into the European Union. The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR), part or not of the governing coalition, could not achieve the re-establishment of the “Bolyai” University. As all means available in domestic politics had been employed with no results, and due to the dismissive attitude of all Romanian governments, the DAHR turned to the European Parliament⁷. The very fact that the action of our MEPs has led to hysterical reactions on behalf of the Romanian political elite reflects well that most of the Romanian political elite is far from protecting the Hungarian minority, but rather acts towards its liquidation, while declaring that the “minority issue has been solved”. I believe that a minority should be able to say that they feel at home in their own country, rather than having the majority declaring that the minority feels alright.

Nobel Prize winners have also voiced their support for the re-establishment of the “Bolyai” University, most recently in January 2005⁸. The representatives of the European minority universities could experience on site in October 2006 the intolerant and anti-minority nature of the “Babes-Bolyai” University, and condemned in a joint declaration the practices of the said institutoin⁹.

Dear Commissioner Frattini,

The cultural autonomy is not segregation as certain Romanian MEPs claim¹⁰, rather an instrument meant to preserve one of the biggest values of Europe, which is cultural diversity. We hereby respectfully ask for your assistance, and wait for your proposals with respect to further steps.

Please, use all your resources in order to re-establish the “Bolyai” University, which has been taken away from Hungarians in Romania. Recommendations coming from the European institutions and especially from the Commission may represent guidelines to follow by the Romanian authorities. The implementation of the European regulations is inevitable. It raises concerns that if the European institutions fail to react to our rightful demands, the situation can worsen. We strongly hope that the European Commission will help the Hungarians in Transylvania to very soon benefit from the same rights as the Italian state provides for its own minorities.

Yours sincerely,



dr. Péter Hantz
physicist, researcher

Annexes:

1. <http://www.mercator-education.org/minority-languages/eu-minorities>

2. http://www.old.edu.ro/minoritati_8.html

3. <http://www.bolyai.eu/dok/ODThatarozat.pdf>

4. <http://www.bolyai.eu/beadvany.php?m=17>

5. <http://www.bolyai.eu/dok/mogy99.pdf>

6. http://www.bolyai.eu/dok/szorolap_en.pdf

The manipulative exhibition was opened by Pierre Moscovici, rapporteur on Romania, who was very aware of the actual situation in Romania, as I have informed personally his assistants on several occasions.

7. <http://www.bolyai.eu/dok/WDBolyai.pdf>

8. <http://www.bolyai.eu/dok/Petition.pdf>

9. <http://conf.bolyai.eu/documents/decl.pdf>

10. <http://www.bolyai.eu/dok/romsoc.pdf>