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## Higher educational chances in Vojvodina – ethnical research<sup>2</sup>

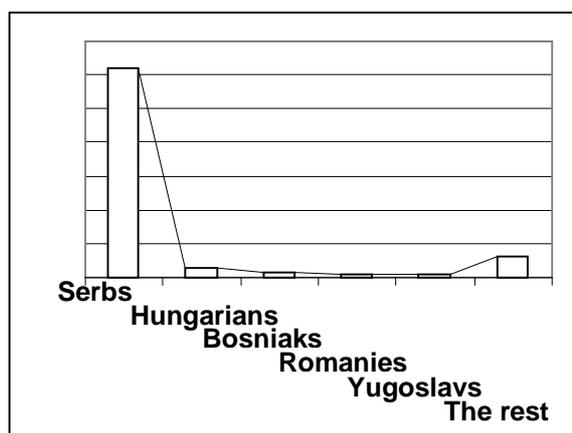
### *Hypotheses:*

- The decline of the Hungarians in the multiethnic Vojvodina is not the result of low natality and assimilation, but also the consequence of inequality and immigration.
- *The further decrease of the Hungarian people could be stopped by the foundation of a renewed educational net in which the total or partial Hungarian language use could be achieved. The Hungarian youth's higher educational qualifications in their mother tongue would improve their specialized knowledge, their employment and enterprise opportunities, of course, only if they speak Serbian and a world language very well, too.*
- Education in one's mother tongue and the knowledge of the environment language are important factors of the existence of ethnical minorities in Vojvodina, whereby the region can successfully maintain its multiethnic characteristics.

### 1. Demographic indicators

There are 7 498 001 people in Serbian (not including Kosovo) according to the most recent census<sup>3</sup>. Today more than 80% of the population is Serbian (not including Kosovo). Hungarians live in the north part of the country and make up the 4% of the total population.

#### *1. Graphic: The ethnical composition of Serbia (not including Kosovo) – 2002*



There are 2 013 889 inhabitants in Vojvodina (in 2002). Until the World War II three nations (Serbs, Hungarians, Germans) dominated the region. Most Hungarians live in North Bačka, North Banat and in the region of the Tisa (in municipalities like Subotica, Kanjiža, Senta, Bačka

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<sup>2</sup> The original text was translated by Scientific Association for Hungarology Research (Eszter, Gábrity)

<sup>3</sup> Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia's Statistical Yearbook (24/12/2004: 52.: pp 295)

Topola, Mali Idos, Ada, Stari Bečej and Čoka and in 36 diasporas), which are in danger of gradually becoming Serbian. The national proportion of Vojvodina today are the following: 65,1% Serbs (in 1991 it was 56,9%), 14,28% Hungarians (in 1991 it was 16,94%, but in 1948 it was 26,13%).

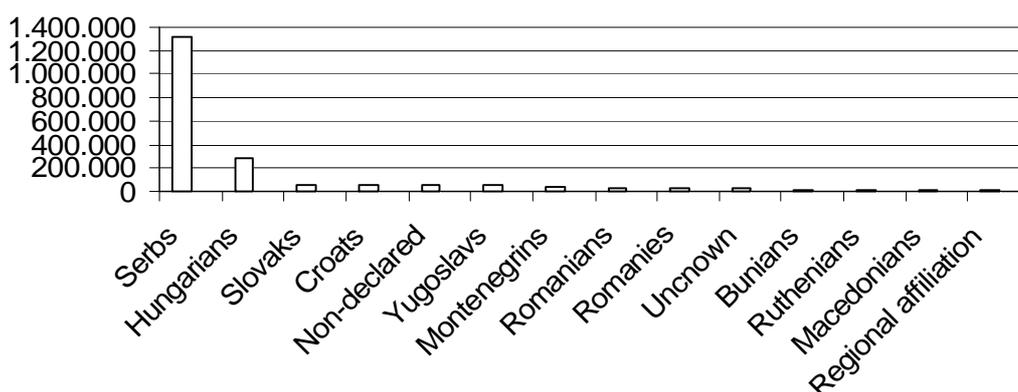
The following table shows the decrease of the Hungarian population and the decline of their proportion in the past century:

*1. Table: The decline of the Hungarians in Vojvodina*

Year:	Hungarians:	The proportion of Hungarians among the inhabitants in Vojvodina:
In 1900	378 634	In the proportion of the inhabitants of Vojvodina: 26% Positive natural increase
60 years later in 1961	(+ 70 953) 449 587	Proportion: 24% Since then declining population
40 years later in 2002	(- 159 380) 290 207	Proportion: 14,28%. Fast growing decline of the population

In the last decade the decline of the Hungarian population was approximately 50 000, from which 34 000 was population decline while the rest was immigration. Such kind of national decrease is very fast in comparison to the majority nation (the Serbs partially solved the problem of population decrease in the region by the refugee waves experienced in the 90's). In most cases Hungarians in Vojvodina emphasise the poor possibilities of good jobs and low earnings as the reason for immigration, but now we will try to analyze the background of this problem. The one third of the Hungarians in Vojvodina live in Diasporas, therefore they live in a linguistically and ethnically disadvantageous situation. Almost half of the Hungarians in Vojvodina (130 000) are gradually heading for the process of identity-loss by the wide and frequent contact with the Serbs<sup>4</sup>. The 2. Graphic shows the diverse, multiethnic composition:

*2. Graphic: The ethnical composition of Vojvodina – 2002*



2.

The continuous decline of the Hungarian school beginners has been neither stopped nor reduced, however the level of mother tongue teaching is still unsatisfactory in each settlement. The

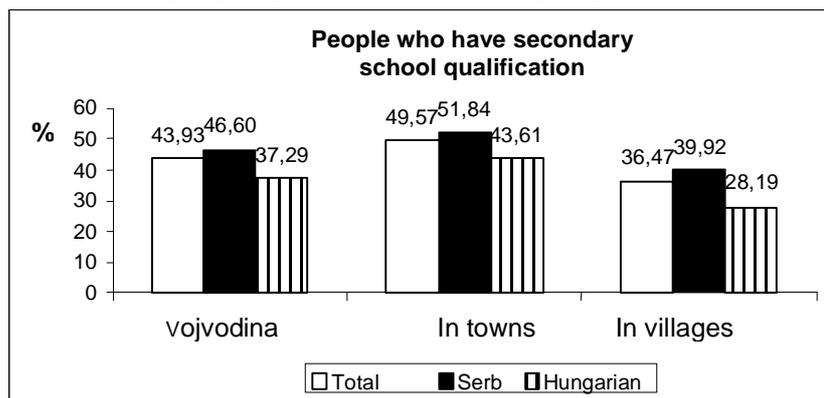
<sup>4</sup> See Mirmics Károly: Nemzeti kisebbségből szórványnépeség, in MTT 7: Kisebbségi létjelenségek, Szabadka, 2003

empirical research<sup>5</sup> (data collected by questionnaires) shows that the Hungarian youth's willingness to attend a higher educational university is lower than that of the majority nation in Vojvodina, owing to the weaker chances of the Hungarian students. The situation can be improved by the formation of a rational and flexible school net. The number of the secondary school students has already risen by the establishment of Hungarian secondary grammar schools and by opening new departments. Especially the secondary school centres will need to be strengthened, for the reason that the low number of students or the unattractiveness of certain majors the secondary school students of Senta and Subotica will have no chance in comparison to the Serb students. The Hungarian minority's secondary school net also has to be backed by student hostels and well-qualified professors.

Most educational institutions in Vojvodina are monolinguals or bilinguals. The disadvantage of them is the following: the Hungarian classes often learn in Serbian in lack of Hungarian teachers (which frequently lasts years) and the institution does not make an effort to employ a Hungarian teacher. In diasporas students often learn the half or one third of their subjects in Serbian. In such situations parents (approximately 20% of them already in primary school) often decide to enrol their children in Serbian classes, which might result the loss of the children's national identity. The advantage of bilingual schools is that the students (during breaks and mutual activities, school programs) during their continuous multilingual activities manage to get used to the multilingual communication<sup>6</sup>, which will be very important for the successful adaptation of the labour market conditions.

The census of 2002 includes the educational qualification data of the inhabitants who are 15 years old or older than that. If we look at the data of the Hungarians and Serbians on elementary, secondary and higher educational school levels the result will be the following: the number of those who finished Hungarian elementary school is higher by approximately 6% on each level than those of the majority nation. However on the following graphic we can see that more Hungarians drop behind in higher education than Serbs. The number of those who finished only an elementary school is higher in villages than in towns.

3. Graphic: The rate of people of secondary school qualification older than 15 years (%)

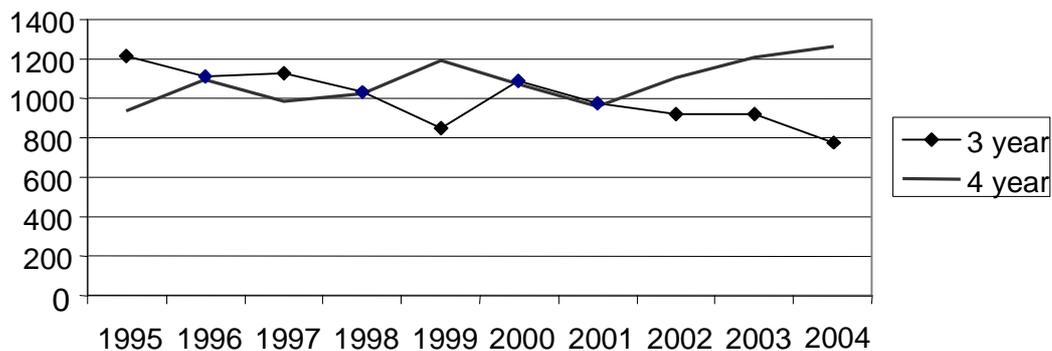


<sup>5</sup> See the data of the Scientific Association for Hungarology Research: (1) *Oktatásügy – a tudás alapú társadalomhoz* – témavezető a Regionális Tudományi Társaság (Szabadka) koordinálásával a Regionális fejlesztési terv projektumában; a Szülőföld Alap Gazdasági és területfejlesztési kollégiuma (Budapest) támogatásával, 2006. (2) and also see Attila, Papp Z.: *Igényfelmérő kutatás a vajdasági magyar fiatalok továbbtanulási hajlandóságáról*; In: *Etnopolitika* (study) Teleki László Alapítvány, Budapest, 2003. 195-208.

<sup>6</sup> See the research of Lajos Göncz in the volume of the Scientific Association for Hungarology Research titled *A vajdasági magyarok kétnyelvűsége (nyelvpszichológiai vonatkozások)*, 2004.

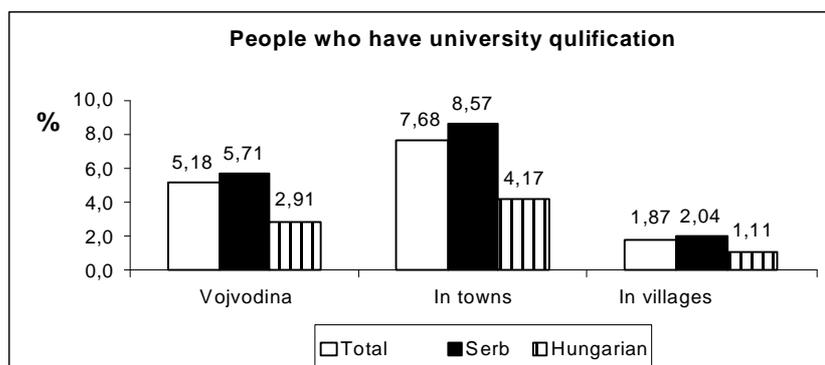
The number of those Hungarians who finished a secondary school is 9% lower (even more in villages) than the number of Serbs. The decreased number of secondary educational students indicates the low willingness to attend higher educational institutions as well as the unsatisfactory number of Hungarian secondary schools. In Vojvodina the 70% of the Hungarian secondary school students study in their mother tongue. It is a promising tendency that in the recent years the  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the students opted for four-year secondary schools<sup>7</sup>.

4. *Graphic: Secondary school Hungarian students' choice of secondary schools (1995–2004)*



The proportion of Hungarian students in comparison to the total number of students on different educational levels is lower every year, however recently mending tendency has been acknowledged. The number of Hungarian students is lower (especially on university level) than the proportion of Hungarians in the total population of Vojvodina (which is 14,28%). The reason for this is not only the fact that less Hungarian children are born, but also that their willingness and chances to continue with their studies is lower than that of the majority nation. It is promising that in 2004 the proportion of Hungarian secondary and college students in the total number of students is higher than 10%, which is the result of newly opened secondary schools of high standards and Hungarian secondary grammar schools (2004). The proportion of Hungarian university students is very unsatisfactory, only the 6% of the total number of students are Hungarians. The current situation has to be improved by preparatory courses for entrance exams, by the good knowledge of the Serbian language and by stimulating scholarship policy.

5. *Graphic: Higher educational rate of people older than 15 years (%)*



<sup>7</sup> In the school year of 2006/07 out of 6648 secondary educational students 4923 students attended a school that ended with a school leaving exam. 1725 students attended a three-year vocational school; therefore they cannot continue studying in a higher educational institution. The Hungarian secondary educational school statistics according to majors (including three and four-year secondary schools) show that most Hungarian students choose technical, engineering, electricity majors and only afterwards grammar schools. The majors of agriculture, economic-commercial are also popular, followed by the medical, chemic-food processing ones.

The number of those Hungarians who have graduated from university is distressingly less in comparison to those of the majority nation. The lag is approximately 3%. The difference is even bigger among those who live in towns: there are by 4% more Serbs who have a university degree than Hungarians. The employment of Hungarians is less in towns meanwhile half of Hungarians live in villages. The situation is better in case of those Hungarians who have graduated from colleges: there are more Serbs by 1,5% who have a college degree in comparison to Hungarians.

Approximately 500 secondary school students are admitted to universities. Those who wish to attend a higher educational institution rather opt for colleges than universities. Other results show that the most popular ones are the Technical College in Subotica and economics trainings. When choosing among universities young people in Vojvodina tend to avoid failure<sup>8</sup>. This means that they prefer studying in the nearest town advised by their parents or commute (daily/weekly) in order to lower the study expenses, and most of them want to study in Hungarian ('energy sparing' behaviour, for the reason that many Hungarian young people do not speak Serbian well). We have observed that the net-effect/town-attraction (in the regions inhabited mostly by Hungarians) has a visible effect on the choice of higher educational institutions. Since 5 years there are more Hungarian students on faculties in Subotica than in other towns of Vojvodina in aggregate.

### 3. Higher education and career paths in Vojvodina

There is no independent Hungarian higher educational system in Vojvodina. The establishment of state Hungarian or partially Hungarian higher education is crucial for the Hungarian intellectuals' qualification in Vojvodina. Concrete institutional solutions and investments are needed: the plans of university foundation according to the principles of the Bologna Declaration, which also takes into consideration the interests of the Hungarian faculties and departments, was formulated in Subotica (teacher training, engineer training and enterprise majors). Besides the training of teachers, lawyers, gardeners and also medical training in Hungarian language (consultations, partial trainings in Hungary) have to be planned as well as the establishment of language departments, Hungarian higher educational college are urgent. At the moment education in Hungarian exists at the University of Novi Sad in 5 institutions: 4 faculties, 1 academy<sup>9</sup> and some colleges<sup>10</sup>.

It is alarming that in long-terms the number of Hungarian students has fallen: the number of Hungarian college and university students was 4364 in 1966/67 – almost the double of the present situation.

2. Table: The number of Hungarian college and university students (%)

Year	1964	1984	1992	2000	2002	2004	
The percentage of the Hungarian students in the total number of the students	4,80	10,30	6,70	7,01	6,60	6,02	11,2
						University	colleg
The percentage of the Hungarians in the population of Vojvodina	23,86	18,94	16,90	15,00	14,28	14,00	
				estimation		estimation	

<sup>8</sup> See Irén, Gábrity Molnár's study *Karrierutak vagy parkoló pályák?* In the project titled *Friss diplomások karrierje, migrációs tendenciája, felnőttképzési igényei a Kárpát-medencében*, Kutatókoordinátor: MTA Etnikai-nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézete, Budapest. 2006. [www.mtaki.hu](http://www.mtaki.hu)

<sup>9</sup> In Subotica Teacher Training Faculty in Hungarian, the Faculty of Architect, Faculty of Economics, in Novi Sad at the Faculty of Philosophy the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature and the Academy of Arts

<sup>10</sup> Technical College and Kindergartens Teacher Training College.

The proportion of the Hungarian students in the total number of students in Vojvodina exceeded with 10% in the 80's, but during the war and the critical years their number fell, especially by reason of immigration. In hope for the change of the political system in 2000 more youngsters remained in the Hungarian higher educational institutions in Vojvodina, but according to the latest data their number is still not satisfactory. Only the 1/3 of the Hungarian students study in Hungarian or partially in Hungarian (especially at the faculties of Subotica), because of the disordered ness of the higher education in Hungarian language. Only a small number of students enrol for the University of Belgrade, but many students study in Hungary (their number is estimated around 700-800). The consultancy centres of colleges in Hungary are also part of the higher educational system in Hungarian of Vojvodina, however the Serbian Higher Educational law (2005) does not deal with it. Still they have existed since 1996/97, and by law they are treated as consultancy centres and the nostrification of the degrees have already begun.

3. table: Summarizing higher educational statistics (2004/05)

Level of education Language of education	Vojvodina			Hungary		Total
	University	College	Consultancy centres	OM TMF <sup>11</sup> scholarship holder	Not OM HTMF scholarship holder	
The number of Students studying in Hungarian	1 149	591	295	500 (estimation)	500 (estimation)	3 035
The number of Hungarian students studying in Serbian	1 14912	25313	–	–	–	1 402
The percentage of the Hungarian students	6,02%	11,25%	100%	–	–	
The total number of Hungarian students	2 298	844	295	1 000 (estimation) <sup>14</sup>		4 437
	3 437					
The percentage of Hungarian students studying in Hungarian	59%			100%		–
The percentage of Hungarian students in the total number of students <sup>15</sup>	7,47 %			–		–

The number of professors and associate professors who speak Hungarian and are employed at a university faculty and college in Vojvodina is around 200. At colleges 17,13% of the professors are Hungarians and at universities 7,74% of them are Hungarians. Their average age is relatively

<sup>11</sup> The scholarship holder of the Hungarian Ministry of Education's Hungarian higher education outside the borders of Hungary, the Scholarship Council of the region and the Ministry of Education decides upon the adjudication of the scholarships.

<sup>12</sup> The total number of the university students in Vojvodina at the state faculties: 38 169.

<sup>13</sup> The total number of the state college students: 7501.

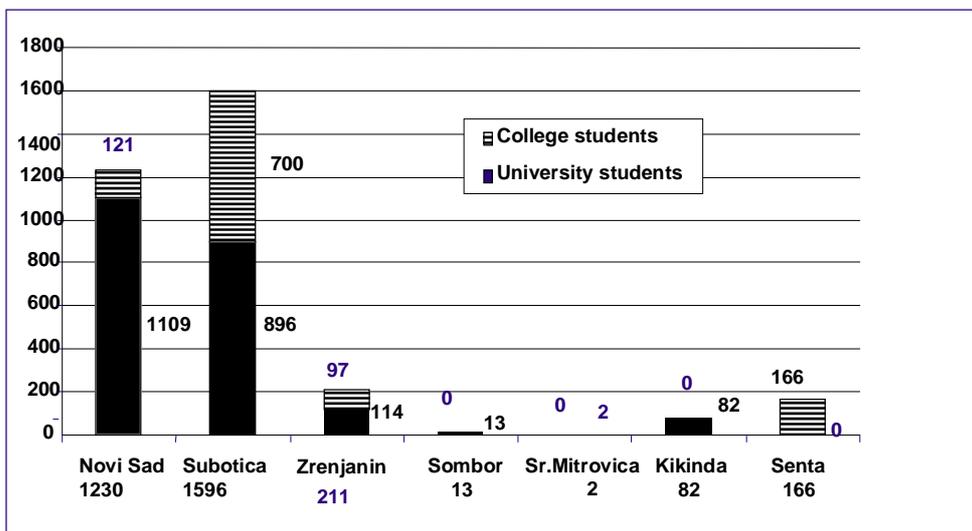
<sup>14</sup> According to the Hungarian Ministry of Education's statistical year-book (pp 30) 714 students studied in higher education in Hungary in the school year of 2004/05. Beside them the settlers and those with double citizenships also studied there, but there are no data about them.

<sup>15</sup> The total number of students in the higher education institutions (not including the private institutions) 45 965.

high. The number of associate professor is very low, in many places reinforcement of the professors is very urgent.

The distribution of the Hungarian students in the state higher educational institution of Vojvodina is the following: most university and college students as well as the students of consultancy centres study in Subotica, followed by Novi Sad where the number of university students is much lower than that of the college students<sup>16</sup>. The 6. graphic shows that Hungarian young people rather study in their mother tongue, in cultural centres where the majority nation is Hungarian and under some economical circumstances. When choosing among higher educational institutions Hungarian secondary school students select from Subotica, Novi Sad, Szeged and Senta. The experience of the last past year's shows that Subotica's popularity has risen. In 2003 there were almost 1600 students in Subotica, while in Novi Sad 1230. The Hungarian young people preferred the Hungarian or partially Hungarian institutions to the Serbian ones, but the cheaper living conditions and the easier travelling possibilities also played an important factor in their choice.

6. Graphic: The territorial distribution of the Hungarian students (college and university) in Vojvodina 2003/04



The lack of pedagogues is a separate problem of the Hungarian education in Vojvodina. The number of elementary schools teachers is mostly satisfactory (except for the diasporas where either the students' or the teachers' number has fallen), but the decreasing number of teachers educating in Hungarian classes can be observed. Most teachers, who educate in Hungarian classes, have studied in Serbian and are not familiar with the subject's Hungarian terminology and many of them have not received psychological, pedagogical or methodological training. The diasporas are in the most need of Hungarian educators. The lack of pedagogues according to majors is the following: mathematics, English, technical and music education. The Teacher Training Faculty in Subotica was founded in 2004 by the decision of the Provincial Parliament, but the enrolment of the students started only in the autumn of 2006, for the reason that the Serbian Ministry of Education recommended the Teacher Training Faculty's admittance into the University of Novi Sad's system only in January of 2006. The new Teacher Training Faculty in Hungarian can shape the education of the Hungarian diverse and flexible departments. The student and professor mobility between Hungary and Vojvodina will be very crucial, and, of

<sup>16</sup> Data of the Provincial Educational and Cultural Secretary

course, the constant professional cooperation, as well. We strongly support the relationship between the Universities of Szeged and Pécs and the teacher training faculties of Vojvodina through mutual research and educational cooperation, guest professor and professor exchanges.

#### 4. The empirical study of students' willingness to continue with their studies

According to the research among young people in Vojvodina (before school leaving exam 2002) less students were willing to study in Novi Sad than in Subotica and Senta, moreover 20% of them would study in Hungary or in other countries. Most students are interested in the technical departments followed by the pedagogical and economic ones. Young people in Vojvodina consider continuing with their studies in a higher educational institution more important than finding a job at their earliest convenience. They do not think that studying at a higher educational institution is not worthwhile, because they will not find a job. The willingness to continue with their studies among the participants of the research is very favourable. We have analyzed Hungarian young people's concepts and opinion about higher education and the conclusions are the following<sup>17</sup>:

- There is a kind of fear of young unemployment, but higher education is not their only effort to dissolve their fear
- However studying at a higher educational institution helps to distract the fear of unemployment and might serve as a 'parking place'
- According to their opinion the establishment of more departments and by the revalorization of vocational secondary schools their job opportunities would grow
- Although the devaluation of the secondary grammar schools can be observed more and more students choose these schools which partially owing to the establishment of secondary grammar schools (2003 – Subotica and Senta).

Today's young people were raised in a decade-long wartime that resulted a drastic impoverishment in opposite to the prosperity experience that preceded the war. Young people are optimistic although their willingness to continue with their studies<sup>18</sup> does not origin from labour-market considerations. In accordance with the European tendencies expansion can be observe owing to the reform of school system in Vojvodina/Serbia, but this has not reduced significantly the chance inequalities of the minorities. The Hungarian school system in Vojvodina is not independent, but it is part of the Serbian school system (programs, translation of text books, no independent school staff, etc.). There are differences on the field of school qualification and higher education, even within the borders of Vojvodina, between some small regions or Diasporas. The formulation of distinguishable behaviours can be observed in the uniform cultural group behaviour model: (1) at Hungarians who live in towns where they compose the majority, (2) at Hungarians who live in villages and they compose the majority, then (3) at Hungarians who live in urban Diasporas and finally (4) at Hungarians who live is rural Diasporas. While among those Hungarians who live in municipals where they compose the majority the danger of assimilation is low and the contact with Hungary is wider, however in Diasporas the situation of the Hungarian education is more and more hopeless, which is the result of the migration of the intellectuals from those regions.

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<sup>17</sup> See Papp Z. Attila: *Igényfelmérő kutatás a vajdasági magyar fiatalok továbbtanulási hajlandóságáról*; In. *Etnopolitika* (study) Teleki László Alapítvány, Budapest, 2003. pp 195-208

<sup>18</sup> According to our data the 42% of the research participants want to continue studying, this rate is 68% among 16-20 years old people and only 32% among people between 21-25.

## Educational-research morals

1. The Hungarians in Vojvodina represent an autochthonous minority in Serbia, however their national existence depends on the extent of their capability of accommodation to the state arrangements and actions of the majority nation and whether the state has an immediate reaction to incident discriminations. In case of Hungarians in Vojvodina the willingness to continue with their studies does not only depend on their intention, but also on their access to higher education and their competitiveness in the region. Unfortunately, especially on the marginal territories most Hungarian children cannot learn in their mother tongue, moreover there is no Hungarian interest that could stand up for these needs, therefore the demand for the prestigious Serbian schools' has risen. In hope for the economic welfare the attachment to national identity often weakens.

2. School expansion among Hungarian young people in Vojvodina can be observed not only on secondary school level, but on university level, too. Their chances are less and for the reason that they are in disadvantageous situation, they have to make more effort to succeed and transform this effort into positive source, for instance, mobility (commuting, hostels); besides our mother tongue they have to acquire the state language, but as an adult they have to speak at least three languages.

3. The relative lag of the Hungarians in Vojvodina cannot be explained by their weak abilities. The inequality of their chances is growing by the absence of good knowledge of the state language, the lack of Hungarian classes in schools, the need of qualified teacher staff and Hungarian text books. The launch of the new generation with the help of graduating from a higher educational institution helps to ease one's life as a minority, therefore the willingness to continue studying is higher than its feasibility.

4. The rise of investments and the improvement of life qualities in the region mean the establishment of employment/enterprise possibilities in Vojvodina. The following factors can encourage students to study in their mother tongue: proper educational net, well-developed infrastructure and text books, youth hostel system, travelling possibilities, well-qualified teachers and their motivation in order to do their best (salary supplements, scholarships). The constant support of the Hungarian pedagogical training institutions (Teacher Training Faculty in Hungarian in Subotica and the teacher qualification in Novi Sad) include building renovations and the motivation of the professor staff. These institutions by their flexibly treated majors can successfully educate the future Hungarian social scientists and intellectuals of the region.

5. The empirical research (depth interviews and focus-group studies in 2006) proves that the Hungarian young employees' carrier is not free from obstacles, especially if their knowledge of the state language is weak or if they do not speak at least one world language. The Hungarian young people need to put in more time and energy into their studies, moreover conscious future planning and market oriented choice of school is need. The following factors are needed for a typical carrier planning in Vojvodina: knowledge capital, financial background, experience capital and net of relationships, language knowledge (of the environment, the state and world) and computer usage. The non-functional bilingualism is present, moreover the carrier planner of Vojvodina do not follow their European contemporaries' example and do not study for a second diploma, but rather take up quick and cheap courses. The phenomenon of re-training is the most common among youngsters who wait approximately 3 years until they are employed (social sciences and faculty of arts). The postgraduate trainings and master courses are the most frequent among economists and technicians.

6. We have to reconsider and reshape the net of Hungarian educational institutions in the region in order to avoid the overlap of majors and also to avoid the establishment of parallel departments (Subotica - Novi Sad – Szeged - Pécs). The maintenance of Hungarian (partially Hungarian) institutions is very crucial within the frames of multilingual universities. There is a demand for the elaboration of a regional national educational strategy by the involvement of professional support and in harmony with the European school reform tendencies. For the reason that the future of the Hungarian communities depends on their labour market status the higher educational and regional developmental programs have to aim for the improvement of these statuses.

### **RESUME**

*In order to develop the Hungarian school programs in Vojvodina it is important to increase the investments, to amend the life qualities and to establish labour and enterprise possibilities in the region. Educational qualifications of the Hungarians have to be developed just as its quality on each educational level through motivating youngsters to carry on with their studies, new scholarships and programs for talented students. In Vojvodina it is very difficult for a newly graduated high-school student to find a job. Youngsters' getting along with more professions and carrying on with their studies makes sense only if the labour market possibilities are also developed by that. The Hungarian young people compete with the majority nation's youngsters on the field of higher education and during their search for a job, too. These patterns usually differ from those of Hungary or Europe. When choosing a profession or job the Serbian /regional labour market conditions are the important factors, instead of the European norm conditions. Most young people hope that after having finished their studies they would soon find a job. In the choice of job possibilities the most important factors turned out to be job stability and salary. The newly graduates rather opt for small private undertakings. The new generation's 'launch' with a higher qualification level gives hope to cope with the minority existence, because of what the willingness to carry on studying is higher than its possibility to bring it to effect. The readiness of the Hungarians of Vojvodina is relatively increasing; their majority would prefer studying in Hungarian on universities. Most of them would opt for the polytechnic, pedagogical or economic fields.*

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