

**ISSUE PAPER**

**HUNGARY: UPDATE ON THE SITUATION OF ROMA**

All the sources of information contained in this document are  
identified and are publicly available.

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## MAP



Source: Merriam - Webster's Atlas. 2001. *Hungary*.

<<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/nytmaps.pl?hungary>> [Accessed 17 Sept. 2001]

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper updates and should be read in conjunction with several IRB publications, including the September 2001 Issue Paper *Hungary: Views of Several Sources on the Situation of Roma*, the May 2001 Issue Paper *Hungary: Government Actions to Improve the Situation of Roma in 2000-2001*, HUN37883.E of 2 October 2001, HUN37889.E of 24 September 2001, HUN37646.E of 3 August 2001, HUN37541.E of 27 July 2001, HUN36712.E of 16 March 2001, HUN36546.F of 16 February 2001, HUN36432.E of 11 January 2001, HUN35936.E of 17 November 2000, HUN35685.E of 6 October 2000, HUN34766.E of 8 September 2000, HUN34791.E of 28 August 2000 and HUN33946.EX of 28 February 2000, as well as information provided in 1998 and 1999, all available in the IRB Regional Documentation Centres and on the IRB Website at <[www.irb.gc.ca](http://www.irb.gc.ca)>.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES

In July 2001, the government approved the concept of a long-term programme aimed at improving the situation of the Roma (RPC 6 Aug. 2001; NEKH Aug./Sept. 2001). According to the Roma Press Centre (RPC), a Budapest-based non-governmental organization, the government plans to submit the corresponding bill to parliament by February 2002 (6 Aug. 2001). On 19 September 2001, Justice Minister Ibolya David indicated that the long-term Roma programme gave a priority to education and that a total of HUF368 million (CAN\$2.05 million)<sup>1</sup> would be given in 2002 in scholarships to Roma students (Hungarian Radio 19 Sept. 2001) compared to HUF235 million (CAN\$1.3 million) in 2000 (MTI 26 June 2001). Commenting on the programme, Bela Osztojkan, the vice-president of the National Roma Self-Government (NRSG), acknowledged that it was a landmark initiative, but stressed that its provisions needed to be specific and to draw from the results of the current medium-term programme (RPC 6 Aug. 2001).

Earlier, the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities (NEKH) announced a new programme designed to further the integration of Roma (MTI 31 May 2001; RPC 5 June 2001). The programme

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<sup>1</sup> All currency conversions indicated in this paper are based on the 9 October 2001 rate with 1 Canadian dollar equal to 179 Hungarian forints (HUF) (Bank of Canada n.d.).

will address three areas: "welfare improvements, anti-discrimination and information services" (ibid.; MTI 31 May 2001).

### **3. ATTACKS ON ROMA**

In what Hungarian Radio described as the first compensation court decision in Hungary in which the "racist" dimension of the crime was taken into account, the Supreme Court ended a six-year proceeding by sentencing perpetrators of an attack against a Roma family to pay them HUF1.5 million (CAN\$8,736) for non-property damages, in this particular case for "racist abuse" (1 Sept. 2001). Previously, a criminal court had found nine individuals guilty of unruly behaviour and causing damage to property, and had sentenced the group to an unspecified term of imprisonment (ibid.). According to Hungarian Radio, the family had fled their house after the group had thrown a molotov cocktail which set the house on fire in March 1995 (ibid.).

In summer 2001, the RPC and the NEKH reported that the Szolnok (Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok county, central Hungary) Municipal Court found five young "skinheads" guilty of an ethnically motivated attack on a group of Roma in Martfu (Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok county) in 1999 (17 Sept. 2001a; Aug/Sept. 2001). Based on Article 174/B of the criminal code Violence Against a Member of a National, Ethnic, Racial or Religious Group (ibid.), the court sentenced the five accused to suspended prison terms ranging from 20 to 24 months respectively and to two years in a correctional educational facility (RPC 17 Sept. 2001a). According to the sources, it was the first time in the history of the Hungarian criminal justice system that perpetrators of an attack on Roma had been sentenced under this article (ibid.; NEKH Aug./Sept. 2001).

On 9 July 2001, the RPC reported that the Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok county prosecutor's criminal department had reopened a case, in which two policemen and two riverbank patrol officers had been accused of forcing a 14-year-old male Roma into the icy waters of the Tisza river in Tiszabura (16 July 2001a). The young Roma was allegedly caught fishing without a valid license by the officers (ibid. 3 September 2001c). The resumed investigation revealed that four other young male Roma had been "ill-treated" by the four officers (ibid.). As of 29 August 2001, charges of torture and unlawful detention were brought against the riverbank patrol officers (ibid.). No mention of charges against the two policemen could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

There are reports that, around 18 June 2001, a molotov cocktail was thrown at the house of the vice-president of the Hencida Roma Local Self-Government in Hajdu-Bihar county (eastern Hungary), as a result of which two children suffered burns (*The Budapest Sun* 21 June 2001; RFE/RL 19 June 2001; ERRRC 2001a; Duna TV 16 June 2001; RPC 25 June 2001; U.S. Newswire 2 Aug. 2001). The incident was condemned by the NEKH, which deplored the injuries incurred by "innocent children" (RFE/RL 19 June 2001). Reports also indicated that the county police had announced a reward for any information leading to the perpetrator (*ibid.*; Duna TV 16 June 2001; RPC 25 June 2001; *The Budapest Sun* 21 June 2001), a move imitated by the president of the Roma Democratic Party who offered a HUF100,000 reward (CAN\$ 554.80) for the same purpose (*ibid.*).

On 11 June 2001, the RPC reported that police had arrested three non-Roma men and charged them with attempted homicide for having thrown molotov cocktails at two houses in Jaszladany (Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok county) (11 June 2001a). The houses were respectively owned by a Roma family and an elderly former priest who was said to be on good terms with the Roma (*ibid.*). Although the victims and representatives of the Roma local self-government (LRSG) had allegedly heard the perpetrators shout anti-Roma statements, the police ruled out the ethnic dimension of the incident and held that it was sparked by a family dispute (*ibid.*). The RPC noted that there had been a number of similar incidents in the village, particularly cases of small groups of "hooded men" insulting Roma walking in the streets at night (*ibid.*). Further information on these incidents could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

#### **4. THE POLICE AND THE ROMA**

On the morning of 13 August 1997, units of the police special forces entered and searched the house of a Roma family in Veresegyhaz (northern part of Pest county) and arrested four men suspected of robbery (RPC 24 September 2001b). While the RPC claimed that police officers had laid the suspects "some in scant attire" on the floor and handcuffed them (*ibid.*), Imre Furmann, the executive director of the Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities (NEKI), held that the Roma men had been "humiliated and brutally treated by police" (Canada 15 Oct. 2001). The suspects were detained in a Budapest police station for 10 hours, although their innocence had been proven earlier during their detention (24 Sept. 2001b; *ibid.* 24 Sept. 2001c). Informed of this incident, the NEKI lodged a complaint against the police for "unjustified and inhuman treatment of the suspects" (*ibid.*). On



24 September 2001, the RPC reported that the Supreme Court had upheld a first instance ruling rendered by the Pest County Court which had sentenced the police force to pay compensation of about HUF1.5 million (CAN\$8,376) to four Roma men of the same family and to write letters of apology (ibid. 24 Sept. 2001b; Canada 15 Oct. 2001; NEKH Aug./Sept. 2001). According to Mr. Furmann, it was the first time that police officers were sentenced to pay fines for "ill-treatment" of Roma (Canada 15 Oct. 2001).

In a 2 September 2001 report, Hungarian Radio provided details on what Jozsef Gal, the vice-president of the NRSG described as "exemplary" cooperation between the police and the Roma community in Baranya county (southern Hungary). Cooperation includes a training session offered by the police headquarters to members of RLSG who then share their knowledge with their constituents, a programme to teach Roma children the tasks fulfilled by the police and possible ways to assist officers, and soccer games between police officers and Roma representatives. Colonel Ferenc Sarkoezi, the county police chief, added that the county police had funded the purchase of school equipment for 30 Roma children in 2001 (ibid.). According to Hungarian Radio, these initiatives have resulted in the disappearance of conflicts between the Roma community and the police, and a reduction in the number of crimes in the county (ibid.). The police can also count on Roma's assistance to "shed[...] light on specific criminal cases" (ibid.). Jozsef Gal praised this relationship and expressed the readiness of the NRSG to assist the police in their work (ibid.).

On 4 July 2001, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) announced the signing of contracts with seven young Roma who had taken part in a February 2001 competition of admission to the ORFK, which was advertised across the country through minority self-governments (RPC 9 July 2001b). According to the spokesman for the Interior Ministry's Education Supervisory Department, a number of other Roma candidates did not meet the requirements, which are a clean criminal record, an "irreproachable" lifestyle, a good reputation and a willingness to perform military service (ibid.).

## **5. POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF ROMA**

### **5.1 Relations Between Local Governments and Roma Local Self-Governments in Jaszladany**

Following are reports of incidents illustrating how tense relations have developed between the RLSG and the mayor in the village of Jaszladany since the latter's intention to open a "fee-paying" private school in the new building of the local primary school (Duna TV 16 Sept. 2001). In early 2001

the Jaszladany Roma Local Self-Government decided to delete the word 'minority' from its name<sup>2</sup> (ibid.; TV2 16 Sept. 2001; RPC 3 Sept. 2001a). Following an official complaint by the local government (TV2 16 Sept. 2001), an official investigation concluded that the move of the RLSG was lawful (Duna TV 16 Sept. 2001). On 28 May 2001, Hungarian Radio announced the decision of the local government of Jaszladany to sue Laszlo Kallai, the chair of the RLSG and to expel him from the social and health affairs committee of the local government of which he was a member. According to Mayor Istvan Danko, Mr. Kallai had "discredited" the committee on several occasions and had described Jaszladany's ethnic Hungarian community as being anti-Roma and "fascist" (Hungarian Radio 28 May 2001). Asked for comments, Mr. Kallai understood this move as "moral reprisal" (ibid.). On 16 September 2001, the mayor boycotted Romany Day celebrations to protest the RLSG's efforts to obtain rights that are not provided for in the law on self-governments (TV2 16 Sept. 2001). In light of these incidents, Karoly Kauko, a counsellor from the Interior Ministry was mandated to conduct talks with the mayor's office and the RLSG and "officially" address every violation of law affecting the Roma in Jaszladany (Duna TV 16 Sept. 2001). For more information on the situation in Jaszladany, please Section 7 of this paper.

## 5.2 Political Parties

Despite a 1994 ruling by the Hungarian Constitutional Court requiring the adoption of a law on the representation of ethnic minorities in parliament, attempts to develop a formula satisfactory to the government and the ethnic minorities have so far failed (PER 25 May 2000). For example, according to *Nepszabadsag*, the Roma and the Germans are the only officially recognized minorities which did not sign a proposal to adopt a formula of ethnic minority representation in parliament (RPC 24 Sept. 2001a). Under this proposal, national minority self-governments could delegate representatives to parliament who would have the same rights as other members of parliament except for the right to vote (ibid.). These changes require the amendment of parliamentary procedures and the adoption of a new law (ibid.).

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<sup>2</sup> In Hungarian, Roma local self-government is "helyi cigány kisebbségi önkormányzat" , literally "local self-government of the Gypsy minority" (BECMIR 2000, 18).

Commenting on the existence of political organizations claiming to represent the Roma community, Aladar Horvath, the chair of the Romany Civil Rights Foundation, stresses the lack of any "common political or spiritual identity" in the national or international Roma community that would enable a "unified action" (*The Christian Science Monitor* 28 Aug. 2001). According to Mr. Horvath, such an action requires a middle class which currently does not exist in the Roma community (*ibid.*). In light of these considerations, Mr. Horvath doubted that a coalition of Roma organizations ready to participate in Hungary's national elections in 2002 would be successful (*ibid.*).

## 6. LEGAL ISSUES

Several media sources refer to a new service of legal aid available to Roma (Duna TV 24 Aug. 2001; Hungarian Radio 19 Sept. 2001; RPC 17 Sept. 2001b; *ibid.* 21 Aug. 2001b; NEKH Aug./Sept. 2001). While Ibolya David, the minister of justice, claimed that her ministry had created legal aid offices for Roma (Duna TV 24 Aug. 2001; Hungarian Radio 19 Sept. 2001), the Hungarian daily *Magyar Nemzet*<sup>3</sup> spoke of a "state-financed legal defense network" launched by the NRSG in the framework of the medium-term programme (RPC 17 Sept. 2001b). Due to open in every county on 1 October 2001 (Hungarian Radio 19 Sept. 2001), the offices operate with a first-year budget of HUF20 million (CAN\$111,720) provided by the Justice Ministry (RPC 17 Sept. 2001b; *ibid.* 21 Aug. 2001b). *Magyar Nemzet* also reported that the NRSG had just submitted to the ministry a list of local offices which have met the requirements to "host" a branch (*ibid.* 17 Sept. 2001b). These branches are expected to offer the Roma information about their rights and duties, and to provide legal assistance (Duna TV 24 Aug. 2001), in particular in cases of incidents with police officers and cases of discrimination in schools, on the labour market and in housing (RPC 17 Sept. 2001b; *ibid.* 21 Aug. 2001b). One or two lawyers would be delegated to each county to advise or represent the injured party during legal proceedings (*ibid.* 21 Aug. 2001c; NEKH Aug./Sept. 2001). Services would be provided at no cost if the individual in need of assistance could not afford the fees (Duna TV 24 Aug. 2001).

A variety of comments have been made on this initiative. For example, Imre Furmann expressed mixed feelings on the initiative: while he praised the government for acknowledging the existence of

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<sup>3</sup> The BBC describes *Magyar Nemzet* as "conservative independent, generally supports the current senior government coalition party Fidesz -Hungarian Civic Party" (30 July 2001).

discrimination, he found the initiative "disquieting" knowing that state-mandated delegates may defend Roma in legal cases against the state, which, he noted, "most frequently" violate the rights of Roma (RPC 21 Aug. 2001c). Commenting on Mr. Furmann's criticism, Csaba Hende, the political state secretary of the Justice Ministry, noted that the state granted almost HUF10 million (CAN\$55,800) to non-governmental legal defense organizations representing Roma suing the state over the last two years (ibid.). However, Aladar Horvath, whose organization provides legal advice to Roma, claims that the state funds his foundation receives cover less than 10 per cent of its operation costs (ibid.). According to Mr. Horvath, the government tries with this initiative to control the civil legal defense system (ibid.). Mr. Furmann mentioned that the NEKI had not been consulted in the development of the network (Canada 15 Oct. 2001) and believed that an anti-discrimination office or ombudsperson with broader powers would better serve the interests of the Roma minority (RPC 21 Aug. 2001c).

Alerted by a petition sent to his office (RPC 1 Oct. 2001), Jeno Kaltenbach, the parliamentary commissioner for national and ethnic minorities, lodged a complaint about an article published in the 28 June 2001 issue of *Magyar Forum* and also posted on the Website of the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP)<sup>4</sup> stating that it incited hatred of Roma (*Nepszabadsag* 17 Oct. 2001). The Office of the Public Prosecutor acknowledged that the generalizations of the article were "unfounded, unacceptable and suitable for generating hatred," but claimed that they did not qualify as public incitement as defined in Article 269 of the criminal code (ibid.).

## 7. EDUCATION

There are references to new initiatives launched by different government bodies in the field of education. For example, the Education Ministry announced measures to prevent Roma students from "falling behind" and to provide additional space in hostels (*Hungarian Mirror* July 2001). In Szolnok (Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok county), the construction of a new hostel expected to accommodate 80 socially disadvantaged children was financed by the European Union through its PHARE programme and by the Education Ministry (NEKH Aug./Sept. 2001). During a conference on the situation of Roma, Education Minister Zoltan Pokorni made reference to a special educational support programme for localities with an unemployment rate higher than average and a schooling level lower than average (MTI 11 June 2001). Quoting *Magyar Nemzet*, the RPC indicated that Mr. Pokorni had announced a

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on the MIEP, please see HUN31739.F of 19 April 1999.

forthcoming reform of the Act on Minorities according to which local minority self-governments would receive the right to manage schools (RPC 11 June 2001b).

Two public foundations are also involved in government initiatives in education. For example, Roma students registered with a post-secondary institution may file an application with the Public Foundation for the Roma in Hungary to obtain a computer (NEKH Aug./Sept. 2001). The Public Foundation for the Development of Public Education offers monthly scholarships to teachers interested in mentoring Roma primary schoolchildren in Budapest (ibid.). With this initiative, the Foundation intends to assist pupils with their admission to secondary educational institutions which deliver "school-leaving certificates" (ibid.). Participating teachers may not mentor more than five children (ibid.). An August/September 2001 digest compiled by the NEKH indicates that an assessment of a school participating in the initiative showed that all mentored pupils had been admitted to secondary schools (ibid.).

After two months of demonstrations in the village of Halmajugra (Heves county, northeastern Hungary), the local government decided to dismiss the headmistress of the local primary school (RPC 21 Aug. 2001d) who had been accused of "racism," and physical and verbal abuse (ibid. 16 July 2001c). The conflict arose after the outgoing headmistress had been reappointed in June 2001 by the local government against the will of a majority of teachers, parents and the RLSG (ibid. 21 Aug. 2001d). Shortly after the reappointment, Lajos-Aary Tamas, the ministerial commissioner for educational rights, stated that the extension of the headmistress' mandate had been legal and noted that the RLSG was not entitled to object to it, given that the school had not received any complementary normative subsidy (ibid. 16 July 2001d). However, following an investigation into the conflict requested by the president of the RSLG (ibid.), Jeno Kaltenbach concluded that the RLSG had the right to intervene in the school's affairs, given that virtually all students were Roma (ibid. 21 Aug. 2001d).

In August 2001, the president of the Mohacs Roma Local Self-Government (Baranya county, southern Hungary) reported that the directorate of the local primary school decided to move a class composed almost exclusively of 9 year old Roma pupils, to a separate building (ibid. 3 Sept. 2001b). As a result of negotiations between the deputy mayor, the headmaster and local Roma representatives, the class was moved back into the main building of the school (ibid.). The school authorities also dismissed as pedagogically "not viable" a demand from Roma representatives that the class and two other "special" classes be combined (ibid.). According to *Magyar Nemzet*, experts were expected to

investigate whether Roma schoolchildren had experienced any other forms of discrimination during their first two school years (ibid.).

In a 25 July 2001 report, TV2 publicized the results of an investigation conducted by Jeno Kaltenbach into a conflict between the local government and the RLSG over the establishment of a private school in Jaszladany<sup>5</sup>. One of the conclusions drawn by Mr. Kaltenbach is that the transfer of ownership or management rights of the school building may not take place without the consent of the RLSG because the statutes of the school make reference to the provision of minority education for Roma children (TV2 25 July 2001). However, Mayor Istvan Danko contended that there was no minority education programme offered in the local primary school, although TV2 noted that more than 50 per cent of the schoolchildren were Roma (ibid.). TV2 also quoted Agnes Soos, the director of the Regional Office of State Finances as saying that the local government received additional state funds for minority education for the 2001-2002 fiscal year (ibid.). Reactions to Mr. Kaltenbach's conclusion varied. While Mayor Istvan Danko refused to comment and forbade members of the local government to speak to TV journalists on this issue, Laszlo Kallai, the chair of the Jaszladany Roma Local Self-Government, reaffirmed his opposition to the establishment of the private school on the premises run by the local government (ibid.).

## **8. HOUSING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **8.1 Initiatives of the Central Government**

Sources refer to several government initiatives in housing and rural developments in which the NRSG is involved. The NRSG will assist those rural settlements which are unable to meet the co-financing requirement in accessing the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's regional development fund (NEKH Aug./Sept. 2001). To fulfill this task, the NRSG received funds from the government state budget (ibid.).

On 9 April 2001, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development outlined a five-year plan to destroy or renovate approximately 500 Roma settlements (ERRC 2001b). With an envelope of HUF50

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on this conflict, please see p. 27 of the September 2001 Issue Paper *Hungary: Views of Several Sources on the Situation of Roma* available in the IRB Regional Documentation Centres and on the IRB Website at <www.irb.gc.ca>.

billion (CAN\$279.2 million), the ministry expected to renovate half of these settlements, eliminate the remaining ones and develop infrastructure (ibid.). However, in August and September 2001, the NEKH referred to a news dispatch saying that the draft resolution had not yet been tabled before the government.

In Ozd, the local government is expected to provide land at a reduced cost for a social housing programme jointly run by the Ministry of Economy and the NRSG (ibid.). This programme is part of the Szecheny plan, a national comprehensive development plan (ibid.).<sup>6</sup> The NRSG also agreed to finance part of the programme (ibid.).

In July 2001, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development announced a plan to relocate Roma families from different parts of Hungary to Cserhat, an isolated and depopulated village in northern Hungary (DPA 18 July 2001; RFE/RL 16 July 2001). While a Justice Ministry official claimed that the plan is an opportunity for individuals "looking for a home, work, and independence", Bela Osztójkan, the spokesman for the NRSG, expressed his opposition to the plan and described it as a "reservation-like" solution (ibid.).

Although the interior minister announced the completion of the compensation procedure for 43 Roma families whose houses in Jand (Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg county, northeastern Hungary) had been damaged by Spring 2001 Tisza River floods, the daily *Nepszabadsag* reported on 17 August 2001 that only eight families had a contract signed with the local public administration office providing for the building of new houses (RPC 21 Aug. 2001a). According to the Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg County Public Administration Office, in other cases documentation was missing and in the case of 10 families, there was a need for further negotiations with the Interior Ministry (ibid.). These families were expected to receive new houses with a value largely superior to what their previous houses were worth; in some cases, this difference amounted to HUF1 million (CAN\$5,584) (ibid.).

## **8.2 Initiatives of Local Governments**

According to TV2 and the Roma Press Centre, between 40 and 100 Roma families in Ozd (Borsod-Abauj-Zemplen county, northern Hungary) owing over HUF100 million (CAN\$559,600) to the Ozd Real Estate Management Office were facing eviction in early October 2001 (10 Oct. 2001; 15 Oct. 2001). In the case of 15 families, the Romani Civil Rights Foundation signed an agreement with the

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<sup>6</sup> For details on the Szecheny plan, please see the following document posted on the Website of Hungary's Finance Ministry: <<http://www.gm.hu/kulfold/english/economy/szechenyi.htm>> [Accessed 24 Oct. 2001]

local government allowing the families to stay in temporary social housing units until more permanent social housing units are built in spring 2002 (ibid.). The local government pledged to extend the provisions of the agreement to the other families (ibid.). However, *Nepszabadsag* reported on 25 Oct. 2001 that the government had not agreed to delay evictions until spring 2002, noting that a Roma family in Ozd had already been evicted (ibid. 29 Oct. 2001).

The economic committee of the city of Pecs (Baranya county, southern Hungary) gave a lot worth HUF4 million (CAN\$22,336) in Pecsbanya, a suburb of Pecs, to build 10 apartments for Roma (RPC 10 Sept. 2001b). The building is funded through the social housing benefits of the families expected to live in the apartments and an allocation by the RLSG (ibid.). According to the RPC, the mayor promised to reconsider the committee's decision after a number of Pecsbanya residents filed a protest against the building of the apartments in their neighbourhood (ibid.). Further information could not be found among the sources consulted.

In Kiskunfelegyhaza (Bacs-Kiskun county, southern Hungary), a survey showing the "dangerously" poor condition of apartments occupied by 30 families, most of them Roma, in the Kun utca settlement, led the local government to order their evictions (RPC 13 Aug. 2001). Under the law, the local government must provide the evicted families with housing (ibid.). A number of families were expected to be relocated to municipal buildings and the remaining through the social apartment building project of the NRSRG (ibid.; NEKH Aug./Sept. 2001). The NEKH indicated that HUF20 million (CAN\$111,360) had been earmarked by the local government to assist the removed families (ibid.).

In addition to central government initiatives to address the Spring 2001 Tisza River flood victims seen in Section 8.1, Florian Farkas, the president of the NRSRG, criticized a plan put forward by the local authorities of Jand to relocate 30 Roma whose houses were damaged by the floods and then ordered to be destroyed (DPA 18 July 2001). Mr. Farkas fears that such a plan may lead to the creation of Roma "colonies" across Hungary if they are relocated from Jand (ibid.).

## **9. EMPLOYMENT**

According to Jenő Kaltenbach, anti-Roma discrimination and the lack of a skilled Roma labour force are the main factors contributing to the high unemployment rate among the Roma, which he estimates at four or five times higher than the national average (Hungarian Radio 7 June 2001). His concern for this situation led him to submit several proposals to the government (ibid.). While a number



of them were accepted, he noted that a proposal to punish employers placing "discriminating" employment advertisements in the media was not selected (ibid.).

According to a report by the Csongrad County Labour Centre (southern Hungary) cited by the RPC, a majority of employers remain unwilling to hire Roma despite state subsidies (RPC 18 June 2001a). The RPC claims that in some cases, employers set requirements unrelated to the advertised positions in order to disqualify Roma candidates (ibid.). In general, labour centres do not intervene in cases of alleged ethnic discrimination for two reasons: they want to remain on good terms with employers and such cases are very difficult to prove since there are usually no witnesses (ibid.). The RPC adds that although the 1996/LXXV Law on Labour Inspection requires that the compliance with the ban on "negative" discrimination be among the matters inspected by the labour inspectorates, labour centres are not legally required to report cases of alleged discrimination to labour inspectorates (ibid. 18 June 2001b).

According to the NEKI, a large number of companies take advantage of employees who are unaware of their rights (RPC 9 July 2001a). For example, the Pest County Labour Court sentenced a manufacturing company based in Hernad (central Pest county) to pay compensation of over HUF1 million (CAN\$5,584) to a former Roma employee (ibid.). In 1998, the company hired the 17-year-old woman to operate a shearing machine designed for adults (ibid.). The employee was dismissed without any compensation after the machine severed two of her fingers (ibid.). She was assisted by the NEKI and a RPC journalist who worked undercover in the company for four days and then revealed unlawful practices (ibid.).

According to Judit Szekely, the deputy state secretary of the Economy Ministry, her ministry was expected to sign an agreement with the NRSG providing for the allocation of several billions of forints to improve the situation of Roma (Duna TV 25 July 2001; *Hungarian Mirror* Aug. 2001). According to the *Hungarian Mirror*, the agreement includes measures to develop employment and training opportunities for Roma with the participation of local government and non-governmental organizations (ibid.). According to Florian Farkas, these measures could lead to the creation of between 10,000 and 15,000 positions for Roma by January 2002 (ibid.; NEKH Aug./Sept. 2001).

## 10. MEDIA

Following a petition from a private citizen and a subsequent investigation into the mention of ethnic identity in a newspaper article, Jeno Kaltenbach rebuked *Magyar Nemzet* for publishing on 9 August 2001 the news item "Policemen Attacked by Roma?" and filed a complaint with the Hungarian Association of Journalists (MUOSZ) to determine the newspaper's liability (RPC 10 Sept. 2001a). The news item was authored by a journalist whom the commissioner had already criticized for a previous article (ibid.). According to Mr. Kaltenbach, the use of the term "Roma" in this published material infringed upon individual rights as nobody had obtained the permission to reveal the ethnic identity of the individuals referred to in the article (ibid.). The mention of the ethnic identity, he added, may fuel ethnic hatred when this information is "irrelevant" (ibid.). The RPC also mentioned that the commissioner had started investigations into allegations that several Pest county police officers could have revealed the ethnic identity of the alleged perpetrators to the journalist (ibid.).

On 13 July 2001, the National Radio and Television Authority (ORTT) ruled that a programme aired on Sundays on the state-owned Hungarian Radio Vasarnapi Ujsag, had regularly been in violation of the media law and of the legal obligation to air "impartial, factually true and balanced" reports (TV2 4 July 2001). On 29 June 2001, *Nepszabadsag* published the following excerpt from the ORTT ruling: "according to the analysis, the ... programme spreads prejudices not only about Jews, but also - although not so regularly - about Romanies and other nations and groups (for example homosexuals)" (ibid.).

## 11. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)

Commenting on the difficulties faced by Hungarian NGOs in funding their operations and programmes, Mr. Furmann observed that many private sources of funding were restricting their support to new programmes and were decreasing their financing of operational costs (Canada 15 Oct. 2001). He further noted that the NEKI was particularly affected by this trend given that its main activity involves significant operational costs (ibid.).

## 12. EMIGRATION OF THE ROMA FROM ZAMOLY

In a 7 June 2001 interview aired on TV2, Jozsef Krasznai, the leader of the group of Roma from Zamoly who successfully obtained political asylum in France, stated that their case was planned to raise the profile of the situation of Roma in Hungary. Mr. Krasznai, who is critical of the measures taken by the current government to improve the situation of Roma, nonetheless has returned to Hungary to prevent other Roma from emigrating and to provide assistance to Roma families in need (TV2 7 June 2001).

According to the daily *Nepszava*<sup>7</sup>, among those granted refugee status in France were individuals being prosecuted for the death of a 20-year-old man of Csakvar (Fejer county, central Hungary) (RPC 16 July 2001b). The daily notes that the defendants are unlikely to be extradited (*ibid.*). Further information could not be found among the sources consulted.

On 8 June 2001, a three-judge committee of the European Court of Human Rights dismissed an application filed by Jozsef Krasznai and 24 other Hungarian Roma from Zamoly on the grounds that they had not exhausted all domestic redress avenues (ECHR 13 June 2001). For more details on this ruling, please see the press release issued on 13 June 2001 by the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights available on their Website at <http://www.echr.coe.int/Eng/Press/2001/June/DecisionKrasznai&Othersepress.htm> [Accessed 12 Oct. 2001].

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<sup>7</sup> The BBC describes *Nepszava* as "left-leaning independent broadsheet, partially owned by trade union interests, [and] generally supports [the] Socialist Party" (30 July 2001).

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