

THE UPCOMING REGIONAL REALIGNMENT OF ROMANIA

(Abstract)

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The bill for the reorganization of the development regions of Romania, which the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) introduced, was tacitly accepted by the Senate of Romania on 12th February 2010. If the House of Representatives also approves the bill, new possibilities will arise for Székelyföld (Seklerland) to achieve its autonomy although political analysts claim that even if the autonomy was achieved it would be a double edged sword for the Hungarians living in Romania.

The development regions in Romania belong to the NUTS 2 group according to the NUTS system established by the EU in 1970. The Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics, as the name implies, was created to assist the generation of regional statistical data by a centrally traceable uniform territorial division.

The NUTS system in Romania has the following structure:

NUTS 1: macro regions

NUTS 2: development regions

NUTS 2: counties

According to the laws aiming at furthering Romania's regional development, the country is divided into eight NUTS 2 units. The development regions do not have administrative powers; the actual political power is still exercised by the counties. However, this could change with the reorganization of the regions, because if this reorganization brought about the investment of the new regions with administrative power, then these regions would contribute to the EU average, they would become real functioning administrative units, not only virtual statistical regions.

The purpose of the DAHR is to create smaller, but more efficient regions than the existing ones, which also take into consideration economic interests, cultural heritage and ethnical characteristics. One such region would be Székelyföld (Seklerland) made up by Hargita/Harghita, Kovászna/Covasna and Maros/Mureş counties.

The DAHR states that "these regions would get funding from the EU much more easily, because of the large population of the area. When creating the macro regions, we took several aspects into consideration: we sought to avoid large differences within the region in the way of thinking or in the quality of life of the inhabitants, and the counties of the development regions to show more similarities."

Certain analysts say that the source of the problem lies elsewhere: according to them the only possibility for the regions to effectively participate in the shaping of regional processes is to have legal jurisdiction and proper funding. If there is no change in this respect the centralised and redistributive system will continue to live on and the regional classification shall lose its importance. If the regions lack the resources and the governmental representatives predominate the executive bodies, it is going to be a pseudo-regionalism and in such a case the region boundaries will not carry any significance either. But there is no unanimity among the political parties regarding the bill; many claim that the DAHR wants to reorganize Romania on an ethnic basis, which they find absolutely unacceptable.

As a response to the divide in the Senate and in the public opinion, Prime Minister Emil Boc declared that there was no decision made yet regarding the final version of the bill, and that it would soon be discussed in the presence of the coalition of governing parties, the DAHR, the national minorities and the opposition, to make a decision, which serves the best interests of Romania. "Under no circumstances shall the bill disregard the Constitution", the Prime Minister added referring to the article of the Constitution saying that Romania is a solid nation state.

A decision is yet to be born. The question is that given the dispute among the political parties whether a consensus can be reached or not, and whether this territorial rearrangement will indeed benefit Székelyföld (Seklerland) in the struggle for the autonomy or not.

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