

DIASPORAS AND IDENTITY

(Diaszpórák és identitás)

8th conference of the South-East Europe Research Institution. Budapest, December 19, 2012

Welcoming Remarks

ENIKŐ SEPSI

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Thank you Dear Colleagues, our cooperating Partner, Dear Ambassador and Professors!

Good afternoon and thank you for attending the 8th conference of the *South-East Europe Research Institution* entitled *Diasporas and Identity* held at *Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church*.

Let me start by quoting some lines penned by *Botond Páll* on the invitation card:

“Diaspora used to be a positive notion. It used to have the same meaning as seed: it carried the promise of growth and the possibility of development. The notion has become fairly negative today giving the sense of dispersal and disorganisation. The canon of the reformed church also says: a diaspora is where a parish cannot be established due to the small number of believers”. Under the aegis of the United Reformed Church in the Carpathian Basin, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church defines attending cross-border relations – including keeping connection with diasporas, moreover, launching programs for people to help them live in a diaspora and maintain their identity – as its important aim. Our mental health training in Székely Land is such a program that has created a powerful network around Transylvania and Székely Land, and this small community, which has been formed in that small centre of the University, matters as a factor of church policy now. The program allows teachers and pastors there to gain knowledge in the field of mental health and to use this knowledge and skill freely for maintaining health and healthy identity. It is a field that has become a part of the pastoral training by now. Teaching Hungarian as a second language and organising teaching practice in cross-border schools are equally important for us, so we hope we will manage to develop a closer relationship with the *Beregszász College*. We also consider the diasporas in America, Canada and the United States while creating staff programs. We have a two-volume teaching resource pack entitled *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader* that has won an international award and already served as a great asset, in its simple and short way, in teaching in diasporas. I'm not a historian, I don't have such a deep knowledge about history as our presenters do and the titles are promising, but I can confirm that it is not a coincidence that Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church is a co-organiser of the conference. We welcome and support any initiatives aiming to disclose and exploit the topic in reference to either nowadays or historical aspects. I would like to thank Professor *András Gergely* for his work in organising the event on the part of the University. I'm thankful to presenters and the audience who have attended the conference. I wish you a useful time and a fruitful meeting in the season of Advent before Christmas. *Thank you.*

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