

## Disregarding the Hungarian Minority at the Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj, Romania

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Dear Sirs,

In order to enable you make a fair and objective judgment about things in a soon to be EU member state, please be kind enough to spare a few minutes and read the report below.

### Disregarding the Hungarian Minority at the Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj, Romania

Out of Romania's 21 million inhabitants 1.5 million are Hungarians, being the second largest traditional national minority in Europe. Although Hungarians represent 6.6% of Romania's population, only 4.4% of students in higher education are ethnic Hungarians, and only 1.6% enjoy the opportunity to study in Hungarian.

The Hungarian-language Bolyai University in Transylvania was forced to merge with the Romanian Babes University in 1959. After the anti-communist Revolution in 1989, the representatives of the Hungarian community asked several times for the re-establishment of the Bolyai University, but their requests were repeatedly denied. The events, listed in chronological order below, that unfolded during the last two years culminated a week ago showing that the self-proclaimed 'multicultural' Babes-Bolyai University is, in fact, a hotbed of ethnic intolerance.

**26 May 2005** The 1<sup>st</sup> European Conference on Higher Education of National Minorities concluded that all European Universities teaching in minority languages use inscriptions in the minority language, except the Babes-Bolyai University.

**1 July 2005** The Hungarian teaching staff of the University requested that multilingual signs be displayed. Instead of asking for the decision of the University Senate, the highest decision-making organ, the Rector issued, however half-heartedly, a decree granting the request.

**October-November 2005** On further pressure from ethnic Hungarian university officials, a series of technical decisions regarding the multilingual inscriptions were issued. The deadline for displaying them was set to 10 January 2006.

**29 November 2005** A formal request for creating three Hungarian faculties at the Babes-Bolyai University, signed by 83% of the Hungarian-language teaching staff, was submitted to the University Senate. The demand was ignored.

**8 November 2006** Since, in spite of decisions made earlier, nothing happened in terms of displaying multilingual signs, the Bolyai Initiative Committee urged that the mentioned decisions be put into practice before 19 November.

**9 November 2006** The University Rector denied the existence of the decision regarding the multilingual inscriptions, and declared that Romanian law does not allow for the placement of multilingual signs in the University. (It must be noted that the concept 'multicultural university' is used in Romanian legislation regarding higher education.) He interpreted his earlier decree as an act regarding only the erecting of statues and effigies of famous Hungarian professors.

**22 November 2006** Dr. Peter HANTZ, university lecturer, placed several Hungarian signs inside various buildings of the university. These inscriptions, having the same size and design as the Romanian ones, were fastened below the latter. However, the security staff of the university forcibly prevented the placement of some inscriptions, like 'No smoking' or 'Information'. The Hungarian signs that were actually displayed were removed and destroyed, or even vandalized, later that day following an order of the Rector.

**27 November 2006** The Rector manipulated the 70 (out of 137) members of the University Senate present at its latest session in order to obtain a vote for the 'exclusion from the teaching staff' of Peter HANTZ and Lehel KOVACS, vice-presidents of the Bolyai Initiative Committee. It is noteworthy that 'for/aye' and 'abstain' votes have not been counted. Nevertheless, it is certain that 14 members (most of them ethnic Hungarians) voted 'against/noe'.

**28 November 2006** More than 120 ethnic Hungarian members of the teaching staff, including all the Hungarian faculty from the Physics and Computer Science Departments (where Hantz and Kovacs teach, respectively) protested against their exclusion. Most ethnic Hungarian student of these departments joined their action. Moreover, members of the Romanian, the Hungarian and the European Parliament also asked for the withdrawal of the decision and the fulfilment of the demands voiced by the Hungarian community.

**29 November 2006** The Hungarian Vice-Rectors of the University resigned.