

Chronology

1999

February 20, 1999 The establishment of the Hungarian Standing Conference (HSC, Magyar Állandó Értekezlet) was decided at the conference 'Hungary and Hungarians beyond the borders – 1999'.

July 7, 1999 The Hungarian Parliament passed a resolution on the establishment of the Hungarian Standing Conference, in the frame of which six expert committees were formed (in the fields of economics, education, culture, European integration, social policy and healthcare, citizenship and self-government).

November 11-12, 1999 The Hungarian Standing Conference decided to create the status law.

2000

March 20, 2000 A debate took place at the plenary session of the Hungarian Parliament concerning the report on the accomplishment of political tasks related to Hungarians living abroad, with special regard to the recommendations of the Hungarian Standing Conference, and concerning the proposal for a parliamentary resolution in connection to this.

March 24, 2000 According to the information provided by Csaba Tabajdi, a delegate of the Hungarian Socialist Party (Magyar Szocialista Párt) 'the socialists are examining what amendments of legislation would be necessary in order that Hungary could provide benefits for Hungarians living abroad in respect of visas, healthcare and employment'.

June 22, 2000 Upon invitation by László Kövér, the leader of the Alliance of Youth Democrats – Hungarian Civic Party (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége – Magyar Polgári Párt), the leadership of the Hungarian Cultural Association of Sub-Carpathia (Kárpátaljai Magyar Kulturális Szövetség) paid a visit to Budapest. At the meeting the parties discussed the idea of the act on Hungarians living abroad.

June 30, 2000 The draft of the act on Hungarians living abroad was finalized under the title 'The conception of the act on certain benefits granted to Hungarians living in neighbouring countries'.

July, 2000 The harmonisation of the conception of the act with public administration was launched.

July 11, 2000 At a press-conference in Budapest the Hungarian Socialist Party declared that 'the socialist party considers it necessary to point out the sources of the benefits of Hungarians living abroad in the draft of the act'. According to their standpoint the beneficiaries of the act shall be those Hungarians living abroad who declare themselves Hungarian. László Kovács claimed that his party supported the benefits granted to those Hungarians living abroad who visit the Kin-State but added that support was justified only in the field of education and culture.

July 13, 2000 According to Béla Markó, the leader of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, it was a regretful policy to inspire great expectations among Hungarians living abroad when making public the idea of the status law because it turned out that the concrete benefits were eventually much more modest. In spite of this, Markó regarded the creation of this legal rule to be significant.

August 19, 2000 The World Federation of Hungarians (Magyarok Világszövetsége) submitted its bill on dual citizenship of Hungarians living abroad to Ferenc Mádl, the President of the Republic, Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister (PM), János Áder, the President of the Hungarian Parliament, and Ibolya Dávid, the Minister of Justice.

August 20, 2000 Within the framework of the festival programmes of the national day of Hungary, Viktor Orbán met the delegates of the Hungarian Standing Conference in the Parliament. At this meeting the Prime Minister invited the delegates of the different organisations of Hungarians living abroad to take a stand on the question of dual citizenship as proposed by the World Federation of Hungarians.

September 26, 2000 The Operative Council of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania decided to support the collection of signatures that was initiated by the Transylvanian Association of the World Federation of Hungarians and whose aim was to substantiate the claim of dual citizenship.

October 19, 2000 Prime Minister Viktor Orbán welcomed Béla Markó, the leader of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania in his office and declared that at the beginning of December the Hungarian Standing Conference would put on its agenda the questions concerning the status law and dual citizenship.

November 22, 2000 At the session of the Parliamentary Committee of Foreign Affairs, when discussing the draft of the status law, Tibor Szabó, president of the Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad (Határon Túli Magyarok Hivatala), made his speech entitled 'The first step of establishing the legal relation between the Kin-State and the Hungarian communities living abroad'.

November 28, 2000 At a meeting in Budapest in the Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad, the leaders of Hungarian churches abroad discussed the conception of the status law and more particularly the planned healthcare support of Hungary provided for Hungarians living abroad. Almost twenty representatives of the Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical and Unitarian churches from Transylvania, Slovakia, Subcarpathia, Voivodina and Croatia participated at the meeting behind closed doors.

November 30, 2000 The leaders of Hungarian churches outside the borders of Hungary agreed on a common standpoint. In the document the church leaders offered their help in selecting the beneficiaries of the act and the bishops advised that a criterion of establishing national identity should be also religious affiliation.

December 13-14, 2000 The draft of the status law was discussed and adopted at the meeting of the Third Hungarian Standing Conference in Budapest. According to the final statement, Hungarians living abroad would receive a Hungarian Certificate based on the information provided by recommending organisations. The recommending organisation may disregard the knowledge of the Hungarian language if the applicant is regarded as a Hungarian by the home-state, if one of his/her parents is of Hungarian ethnic origin, if his/her spouse has a Hungarian Certificate, if s/he is a member of a Hungarian organisation, if s/he is registered as Hungarian by a church, if s/he attended a Hungarian school for at least 4 years, or if his/her children attend or attended a Hungarian school. The beneficiaries would be able to avail themselves of the benefits through the Certificate. The Hungarian Socialist Party and the Alliance of Free Democrats (Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége) had reserves about the draft, but finally they also signed the final statement.

2001

January 18, 2001 In the Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad the government and the various Hungarian organisations outside the borders of Hungary finalized the text of the bill. Several details, for example the scope of the beneficiaries, the period of validity of the future Hungarian Certificate and some benefits were made more accurate.

January 22, 2001 The President of the Hungarian Republic, Ferenc Mádl discussed the status law with the representatives of the six parliamentary parties. Except for the Alliance of Free Democrats, every party supported the bill.

January 22-25, 2001 The bill, supplemented with the modifications proposed by the leaders of the Hungarian organisations abroad at the Third Session of the Hungarian Standing Committee, was discussed from the point of view of public administration.

February 12, 2001 Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in his speech opening the spring session of the Hungarian Parliament, claimed that the status law would be perhaps the most important legal regulation of Hungarian collaboration in the Carpathian Basin and expressed his hope that the bill would gain the support of all members of Parliament.

February 28, 2001 At the session of the Parliamentary Committee of Foreign Affairs the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Alliance of Free Democrats doubted the existence of a consensus between parliamentary parties on the fundamental questions concerning Hungarian communities living abroad. They claimed that agreement was dissolved in 1996 by the then opposition party in the course of the preparations for concluding a basic treaty with the neighbouring countries.

March 1, 2001 At a press-conference, Ion Iliescu, the President of Romania, implied disapproval of the status law but remarked that it would be the responsibility of the Hungarian Parliament to find a suitable solution.

March 2, 2001 The Hungarian Government discussed the bill in the course of a first reading. Following the session the spokesman of the Government claimed that in 2002 it would cost around 6 billion HUF (about 240,000 EURO) to implement the act.

April 10-11, 2001 The Parliamentary committees together with the leaders of the Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad and the competent state secretaries of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs discussed whether the bill was in a state suitable to be submitted to general discussion.

April 19, 2001 The Hungarian Parliament began the general parliamentary discussion of the status law.

April 20, 2001 Mircea Geoana, the Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs declared that Romania had serious objections and doubts concerning the planned Hungarian status law and wished to consult the Hungarian party on this question.

April 23, 2001 The Slovak and Hungarian Prime Ministers disagreed on the consequences of the Hungarian status law. At a meeting with Viktor Orbán, Mikuláš Dzurinda, the Slovak Prime Minister expressed his anxieties about the status law in preparation.

Adrian Năstase declared that the Hungarian status law could be discriminative concerning the fact that the benefits granted to Hungarian nationals would equal negative discrimination against others. According to the Romanian Prime Minister, discrimination in favour of the Hungarians means negative discrimination against others on ethnic grounds.

April 24, 2001 Orest Klympush, the ambassador of the Ukraine in Budapest claimed that Ukraine would not take a stand on the status law until its adoption by the Parliament.

April 27, 2001 Vladimír Mečiar, the Slovak ex-Prime Minister and the leader of the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko), described the planned Hungarian status law as a flagrant interference with the internal affairs of the Slovak Republic and the underlying intention of it as an attempt to change the ethnic proportions of another country.

May 10, 2001 At a meeting of the heads of government of NATO candidate countries in Bratislava, Adrian Năstase, the Romanian PM discussed problems relating to the status law with Mikuláš Dzurinda, the head of the Slovak Government.

May 12, 2001 Adrian Năstase declared that without consultation with the Romanian authorities and without a suitable bilateral settlement, the act on the status of Hungarians living abroad could not be applied on the territory of Romania.

May 15, 2001 In Bratislava Iván Bába, the public administration secretary of state of the Hungarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Ján Figel, the secretary of state of the Slovak Ministry for Foreign Affairs (and the responsible person for negotiations with Brussels on the issues of Slovakia's integration), reached a consensus and agreed that expert discussions would be held on the status law in order to find 'the European answers to European questions'. Eduard Kukan, the Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, expressed his concern about the introduction of the status law.

May 18, 2001 The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested that Hungary should be willing to proceed with bilateral consultations with Romania if it wished that the act on the status of Hungarians living abroad be applicable on the territory of Romania.

May 23, 2001 The Parliamentary Committee of Foreign Affairs discussed the 129 proposals for modification of the status law.

May 24, 2001 In the framework of consultations with Hungarian organisations beyond the borders of Hungary in Óbecse in Voivodina, a delegation of the Socialist Party exchanged views with the leaders of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina (Vajdasági Magyar Demokrata Párt) on the status law.

In Budapest in the course of a Romanian-Hungarian negotiation on the status law, the Romanian party complained that the scope of the act was not specified in terms of territory and its application would lead to discrimination in the territory of Romania.

In Lendva (Slovenia) the delegation of the parliamentary group of the Hungarian Socialist Party lead by Zoltán Vancsik MP discussed the status law with the delegation of the Hungarian National Self-Governing Community of Muravidék led by György Tomka.

May 27, 2001 Following a meeting in Cluj (Kolozsvár) the leaders of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség) and the Hungarian Coalition Party in Slovakia (Magyar Koalíció Pártja) declared that it was necessary to convene the autumn session of the Hungarian Standing Conference.

May 28, 2001 Valeriu Stoica, the leader of the Romanian National Liberal Party claimed that the Hungarian status law was based on ethnic grounds, which could result in conflicts similar to what had happened in the former Yugoslavia. According to Valeriu Stoica, the implementation of the Hungarian status law in its present form had to be prevented.

May 29, 2001 In Sub-Carpathia (the Ukraine) a delegation of the Hungarian Socialist Party discussed the draft bill with the leaders of Hungarian organisations in the Ukraine.

May 30, 2001 Ferenc Mádl, the President of the Republic of Hungary, welcomed the leaders of the member organisations of the Hungarian Standing Conference operating in the neighbouring countries. The principal subject of the discussion was the draft of the act on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries.

June 1, 2001 A delegation of the Hungarian Socialist Party exchanged views with the leaders of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania about the proposals for modification relating to the status law.

June 5, 2001 Ján Soth, the director of the Slovak Department of Foreign Affairs and the person responsible for bilateral relations, informed Miklós Boros, the Hungarian ambassador in Bratislava, that the Slovak party had thoroughly examined the Hungarian status law in preparation and its official standpoint would be shortly announced. Slovakia wished to discuss the act by resorting to the diplomatic channels as established by the Slovak-Hungarian basic treaty.

June 6, 2001 The Parliamentary Committee of Foreign Affairs discussed the proposals for modification submitted in connection to the status law.

In the course of the discussion held in Brussels by Zsolt Németh, political secretary of state of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and Günter Verheugen, Commissioner for Enlargement, the issue of the status law amongst others was touched upon. According to Verheugen, the European Union found that the Hungarian status law was belated. As Verheugen remarked, the act would have made sense at the beginning of the 1990s because at that time, to a great extent as a result of the Hungarian complaints, the Union began supporting the protection of minorities. Brussels would welcome the Hungarian Government's efforts if it tried to find a remedy for the problems of Hungarians living abroad within the framework of the EU. From a legal point of view it means that the status law should not be incompatible with EU regulations.

June 7, 2001 Jaroslav Chlebo state secretary of foreign affairs, informed Boros Miklós, Hungarian ambassador in Bratislava, that according to the official standpoint of the Slovak presidium the adoption of the act on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries by the Hungarian Parliament would be contrary to the widely accepted principles of international law and he handed this over to the ambassador in a reminder note.

June 10, 2001 Béla Markó, the leader of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, expressed his concern about the idea according to which an extra labour force would be provided from the neighbouring countries in order to maintain the economic development of Hungary.

June 11, 2001 Hennagyij Udovenko, the president of the parliamentary committee of national minorities and human rights in Ukraine, appreciated the Hungarian status law in preparation.

June 12, 2001 Iván Bába, the public administration state secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, called upon counsellor Milan Kurucz, the agent of the Slovak ambassador in Budapest, and informed him about the Hungarian standpoint concerning the Slovak reminder note related to the status law. The secretary of state claimed that the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs continuously informed the official representatives of EU and NATO member states and those of the neighbouring countries about the act under preparation.

June 14, 2001 Sándor Nagy, the leader of the delegation of the Hungarian Socialist Party visiting Bucharest, declared that his party supported the status law and that he did not understand the objections of the Romanian Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social-Democrat).

June 15, 2001 At a press-conference held in Budapest Zsolt Németh, the Hungarian and Jaroslav Chlebo, the Slovak foreign state secretary agreed that as regards the status law the two countries would resort to the accepted diplomatic channels and would not send messages to each other through the press.

June 19, 2001 The Hungarian Parliament passed the Act on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries with 306 members voting for the act, 17 members against it and 8 members abstaining. It was only the Alliance of Free Democrats that voted against the act.

The Slovak Ministry for Foreign Affairs severely criticised the adoption of the Hungarian status law. According to an announcement from Bratislava, the Hungarian status law was not a modern European solution but a regression. In Slovakia only the acts of the Republic of Slovakia would be applied and the country was willing to fulfil only those international obligations which it had assumed independently and voluntarily.

According to Ion Iliescu the Hungarian Certificate had nothing to do on the territory of Romania. He pledged to ask the Hungarian Government to take into account the remarks of Romania in connection to the act on Hungarians living abroad. Mircea Geoana, the Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs, characterised the act as anachronistic and non-European, saying it did not comply with present European trends and it contradicted all that had been decided upon at the EU summit in Göteborg.

State secretary Cristian Diaconescu handed over a note listing Romanian criticisms and objections concerning the status law to István Íjgyártó, the Hungarian ambassador in Bucharest. A similar memorandum was submitted by the Romanian ambassador in Budapest to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Béla Markó, the leader of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, welcomed the adoption of the status law, saying that this legal regulation pooled all the intentions of Hungary to support Hungarian communities and individuals of Hungarian minorities living beyond its borders.

The leader of the Romanian Democratic Party (Partidul Democrat) declared that the adoption of the Hungarian status law was not compatible with the basic treaty and this had been made possible by the fact that the government with due regard to its partner, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, had treated the question too mildly.

The Romanian National Liberal Party (Partidul National Liberal) claimed that the status law was anti-European, that it discriminated on ethnic grounds and would result in the overturn of the economic balance.

June 21, 2001 At a press-conference in Cluj (Kolozsvár), Prime Minister Adrian Năstase said that the Romanian government could not prevent the adoption and application of laws in Hungary, but not a single act passed in Budapest could be implemented on the territory of Romania.

Romanian PM Adrian Năstase announced that apart from the Romanian-Hungarian basic treaty concluded in 1996, Romania was ready to cancel any bilateral agreement with Hungary because of the status law. The PM remarked that he had sent a letter to Günter Verheugen, the Commissioner for Enlargement of the EU, Romano Prodi, the President of the European Commission, and Chris Patten, the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs. In this letter he had presented the elements of negative discrimination in the status law and he had expressed his concern about the security of the region.

Eduard Kukan, the Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, claimed that the adoption of the Hungarian status law would not undermine the good neighbourly relations of the two countries. Answering questions from the press, he pointed out that there were two reasons for the reservations of Slovak diplomacy: first, Bratislava would object to the legal, institutionalised relation between the Hungarian Government and the citizens of another country and second, the adopted Hungarian legal regulation would lead to discrimination.

June 22, 2001 According to Slovak PM Mikuláš Dzurinda, the Hungarian status law was not suitable and did not comply with the legal norms of the EU; however, it would not have any effect on Slovakia because it would hardly come into force until Slovakia's accession to the EU due in two and a half years.

Ion Iliescu, the Romanian head of the state did not exclude the possibility that because of the adoption of the status law Romania would suspend the basic treaty concluded with Hungary in 1996.

June 24, 2001 In Bucharest Goran Persson, the Swedish PM, fulfilling the post of the President of the EU claimed that in order to clarify the situation around the adoption of the status law he would contact the Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs as soon as possible.

June 26, 2001 The Romanian delegation taking part in the work of the Council of Europe prepared a draft resolution which prompted the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to call upon Hungary not to implement the stipulations of the status law. Except for Árpád Duka-Zólyomi (Hungarian Coalition Party), every Slovak member of the Parliamentary Assembly signed the Romanian proposal. It was signed by 37 members, especially the members of the socialist and European democrat groups; however, some of them withdrew their signature after they had signed the Hungarian proposal as well.

The delegates representing the Hungarian parliamentary parties and the Hungarians living abroad were convened to discuss the crisis and to prevent the submitting of a Romanian draft resolution reproaching Hungary to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The standpoint taken by the Romanian party asked for the suspension of the status law since 'it provides for discrimination between the Hungarian minorities living in the countries concerned and the majority population and it applies extraterritoriality and will rouse new tensions between ethnic groups, which will lead to enhanced instability of the region.'

June 27, 2001 In a statement the delegates of the parliamentary and provincial organisations of the Hungarian Standing Conference welcomed the act on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries.

László Surján, the leader of the Hungarian delegation to the Council of Europe claimed that in the course of its working session the Hungarian parliamentary committee taking part in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe had taken a position concerning the Romanian proposal criticising the status law and had proposed to convene a meeting of the joint committee on minorities of the two countries which had been postponed for two and a half years because of the unwillingness of the Romanian party.

Hungarian Foreign Minister János Martonyi sent a letter to his Romanian colleague, Mircea Geoana, in which he proposed to solve the conflict through bilateral consultations and the negotiations of the joint intergovernmental committee on minorities.

PM Adrian Năstase and Béla Markó, leader of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, discussed the situation arising from the status law. Béla Markó suggested that the tension could be reduced.

June 28, 2001 The Hungarian members of the Parliamentary Assembly launched a counterattack to neutralise the Romanian initiative criticising the status law and submitted several proposals to the Assembly promoting cross-border collaboration to protect the identity of national minorities.

In Budapest PM Viktor Orbán and Foreign Minister János Martonyi met Béla Markó, the leader of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, who asked the Hungarian head of government to reduce tension through bilateral dialogue between the two governments.

June 29, 2001 Erneko Landaburu, the Director General of Enlargement in the European Commission, stated that Hungary would have to arrive at a compromise with Slovakia and Romania before the status law came into force.

The permanent committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe decided to refer the Hungarian and Romanian initiatives to the Venice Commission to report on.

June 30, 2001 Adrian Năstase, the Romanian head of government, wrote a letter to Günter Verheugen, Commissioner for Enlargement, in which he asked the Commissioner to support the

Romanian proposal for the suspension of the implementation of the status law until Hungary concluded her accession negotiations.

July 1, 2001 According to Mircea Geoana, the letter of Hungarian Foreign Minister János Martonyi about the issue of the status law was a bit late, but it could still help to solve the situation.

July 3, 2001 The government in Bratislava authorised Jaroslav Chlebo, state secretary for foreign affairs and the Slovak co-leader of the joint committee monitoring the implementation of the Hungarian-Slovak basic treaty, to initiate consultations with his Hungarian partner, Zsolt Németh, the political state secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Hungarian co-leader of the joint committee.

July 4, 2001 Jaroslav Chlebo Slovak foreign state secretary announced that Slovakia would invite Hungary to discuss the implementation of the status law.

Wilfried Martens, the leader of the European People's Party declared that Hungary had every right to support the more than 3 million Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries.

July 5, 2001 In Belgrade Goran Svilanović, the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, assured Iván Bába, the Hungarian foreign state secretary, that Belgrade did not wish to raise objections about the act.

July 6, 2001 In his letter to Mircea Geoana, Minister of Foreign Affairs Martonyi János confirmed his conviction according to which a dialogue based on common European values might settle the different points of view concerning the questions of the act on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries. This letter was an answer to Mircea Geoana's letter dated July 3.

The Venice Commission accepted the proposal of János Martonyi, Foreign Minister of Hungary, requesting a comprehensive study of the protection of minority identities in Europe and rejected the one submitted by Adrian Năstase, the Romanian head of government, asking for an opinion only on the Hungarian status law.

July 9, 2001 According to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Venice Commission had accepted the proposal of the Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs but also that of the Romanian Prime Minister.

Following discussions with Ion Iliescu, the Romanian head of state, Günter Verheugen, the Commissioner for Enlargement, said that Hungary should be encouraged to proceed with the dialogues with her neighbours on the status law. Verheugen added that Hungary was ready to proceed in this way, and thus the problem could be solved.

July 10, 2001 According to Gheorghii Prisacaru, the chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Romanian senate, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs should call upon the Hungarian party to suspend the implementation of the status law.

July 11, 2001 At its session in Brussels the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament enclosed a proposal for modification to the Hungarian country report being prepared by the EP. In case of its adoption the Committee of Foreign Affairs would be entrusted to examine whether the Hungarian status law was compatible with the legal rules of the EU and with the principle of good neighbourly relations and co-operation between the member states.

July 13, 2001 The Hungarian and Romanian Foreign Ministers started negotiations behind closed doors. The main issue on the agenda of the meeting of János Martonyi and Mircea Geoana was the status law. In the course of the negotiations the Romanian party handed over a memorandum that contained the most important elements of the Romanian standpoint.

July 14, 2001 In Bucharest Mircea Geoana, the Romanian and János Martonyi, the Hungarian Foreign Minister, discussed the situation evoked by the status law. Subsequently, Martonyi met Adrian Năstase, the Romanian head of the government, as well but the two parties did not make any progress. The Hungarian party offered for Romania to take part in the elaboration of the enforcement provisions of the status law while Romania asked for the suspension of the act. The parties agreed that they would proceed with negotiations in September within the framework of the Hungarian-Romanian intergovernmental joint committee. According to Năstase, the Hungarian status law introduced new principles into the European norms of the protection of national minorities, which would change the underlying philosophy of the relevant Council of Europe Framework Convention.

July 24, 2001 Rolf Ekeus, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, was received by Ion Iliescu. Ekeus admitted that Romania had the intention to respect the rights of national minorities. At the same time he suggested that the Romanian Parliament should adopt Ordinance No. 137 of the Government on the prevention of discrimination against minorities. The High Commissioner expressed his wish to consult the Hungarian Government on the status law.

July 25, 2001 The spokesman of the Romanian government suggested that the Romanian Government did not consider it natural and necessary for the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania to take part in consultations held by the governments of Hungary and Romania on the question of the status law.

Romano Prodi, the President of the European Commission, ensured Romanian PM Adrian Năstase in a letter that the Commission kept on monitoring the situation that developed after the adoption of the Hungarian status law. The letter, dated 20 July, was made public by the Romanian Government on 25 July. Prodi emphasised that before the adoption of the act the commission had 'expressed its concern as regards the compliance of the EU member states and candidate countries with the prohibition of discrimination'. The President of the Commission noted that the Hungarian legal rule was a framework regulation setting forth broad objectives and its implementation could be possible only after the adoption of the enforcement provisions. Prodi said that the Commission expected the principle of the prohibition of discrimination to be respected after the elaboration of the enforcement provisions.

July 28, 2001 Following the discussions with Viktor Orbán, the Hungarian head of government, Adrian Năstase claimed to see some possibilities for experts to reach a consensus concerning questions of the status law. Năstase declared that for the time being Romania withdrew its request concerning the suspension of the implementation of the act since earlier discussions made it possible to proceed with negotiations between experts within the Hungarian-Romanian intergovernmental joint committee. Furthermore, Năstase announced that the issue would be submitted to the Romanian Parliament if the joint committee could not reach an agreement before the middle of September.

September 5, 2001 Dismissing the proposals for modifications, the plenary session of the EP adopted phrases of compromise when voting for the country reports. The European Parliament 'takes notice of the status law, just like the anxieties of the Romanian and Slovak Government, calls upon the Commission to make an assessment on such kind of acts in general, measuring to what extent these acts are in compliance with community law and with the principles of good neighbourly relations and the relations of member states'.

At the meeting of the ambassadors and consuls of Romania accredited abroad, President Ion Iliescu claimed that the status law was 'discriminative and non-European'. In connection to this he insisted that 'Transylvania is not a co-sovereign region between Romania and Hungary', it is a part of Romania, and consequently 'for its citizens and for its Transylvanian citizens it is Romania that creates the laws'.

September 10-11, 2001 At the session of the expert committee on co-operation in minority affairs of the Hungarian-Romanian intergovernmental joint committee, the act on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries was touched upon. According to Tibor Szabó, the chairman of the Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad, the Romanian party was interested primarily in questions of procedure, employment and the allocation of benefits.

September 11, 2001 The leader of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania received Rolf Ekeus, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. Ekeus expressed his hope that the dispute over the status law would be settled through negotiations by the governments and communities concerned.

September 18, 2001 At a meeting of the joint committee of the European Parliament in Bucharest Mircea Geoana claimed that 'Romania does not wish to become a territory subject to experiment a new generation of acts on minorities'.

September 24, 2001 In Bucharest at the session of the expert committee on co-operation in minority affairs of the Hungarian-Romanian intergovernmental joint committee, negotiations began on five subject matters.

September 25, 2001 Cristian Diaconescu, the Romanian Foreign State Secretary, claimed that no consensus had been reached as regards the concrete questions of the status law at the session of the Romanian-Hungarian expert committee on minority issues in Bucharest. The Romanian secretary of state mentioned that the Romanian objections had been summed up in seven points. Amongst these Diaconescu pointed out the Romanian reservations concerning the issuing of the Hungarian certificates, namely that Romania expected the scope of the act not to cover family members who were not of Hungarian ethnic origin. Furthermore, Romania objected to the creation of databanks on individuals as a result of the implementation of the act.

October 2, 2001 After discussions with János Áder, the President of the Hungarian Parliament, Valer Dorneanu, the President of the Romanian House of Representatives, said that the problem of the status law would be solved by the common future in the European Union. Dorneanu suggested, however, that the act violated the sovereignty of Romania, it had an extraterritorial nature, and it generated inequalities and discrimination, which was not compatible with European standards or with the principles of good neighbourly relations as these had been set forth in the basic treaty between the two countries. As opposed to this Áder emphasised that the Hungarian status law meant a solution that abode by international law from every aspect and did not infringe upon the sovereignty of Romania.

October 5, 2001 At an unofficial meeting in Miercurea-Ciuc (Csíkszereda), Zsolt Németh, the Hungarian and Cristian Diaconescu, the Romanian state secretary for foreign affairs, agreed to sign the protocol closing the session of the Romanian-Hungarian expert committee on minority affairs.

October 9, 2001 After having consulted representatives of several ministries about the Slovak standpoint, foreign state secretary Jaroslav Chlebo announced that Slovakia had not changed its critical position about the Hungarian status law. The *SITA* news agency quoted Chlebo: 'We object to the extraterritorial scope of the act, to the transgression of competencies and to the negligence of obligations undertaken in bilateral agreements'.

October 10, 2001 In Zagreb the co-leaders of the Croatian-Hungarian joint committee on minority affairs stated that Croatia supported the act on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries.

After having consulted Dragisa Pesic, the Yugoslavian Head of Government, Prime Minister Adrian Năstase claimed that the countries affected by the status law should discuss the necessity of common action.

October 18, 2001 Slovak Head of State Rudolf Schuster received Ferenc Mádl, President of the Hungarian Republic, in Bratislava. At the press-conference Mádl emphasised that the only aim of the Hungarian status law was to help Hungarians living abroad to maintain their cultural identity, their mother tongue and to promote their well-being in their home country. Rudolf Schuster suggested that the act should comply with Slovak legal rules in force and asked Mádl to resort to his authority in order that the act fulfilled this requirement.

October 19, 2001 Adopting recommendations related to acts that support minorities beyond borders, the Venice Commission declared that the responsibility for the protection of minorities primarily rested with the state of the territory in which these minorities lived; beside this, however, the Kin-State was also entitled to pass legislation supporting minorities. According to the opinion of the Commission, legal rules on minorities living abroad could be implemented only while respecting international regulations. The Kin-State might take part in supporting minorities beyond its borders if it contributed to maintaining the cultural-linguistic identity of the minorities concerned.

Mircea Geoana, Romanian foreign minister, did not regard the report of the Venice Commission as the defeat or victory of one or the other party. Geoana recalled that the Venice Commission had approved of Romania having asked for the opinion of eminent experts in European questions relating to the regulation of minority protection.

In Bucharest Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Năstase was glad to hear that the Venice Commission had approved of the Romanian standpoint and that it had found Romanian reservations to a great extent well-founded. Năstase emphasised that the opinion of the Venice

Commission would play an important role in drawing up the report of the legal committee of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly initiated by Romania and Hungary.

October 22, 2001 The interpretation of law by the Slovak Foreign Ministry is similar to the report of the Venice Commission, including statements related to the Hungarian status law. According to the position taken by the Slovak Foreign Ministry, the Commission proclaimed that 'acts on foreign citizens shall have effect only on the territory of the state creating the legal rule and the scope of the benefits offered for such citizens shall extend exclusively to the field of cultural ties and education'. Bratislava emphasised especially that 'the Venice Commission highlighted the fact that without the express agreement of the country concerned unilateral measures of preferential treatment cannot have effect on territories that have already been covered by bilateral agreements in force'.

October 24, 2001 The persons invited by the Provisional Hungarian National Council held the statutory meeting of the recommending organisation in Subotica (Szabadka). The founding members of the civic association of Concordia Minoritatis Hungaricae adopted the articles of the organisation to be created, they signed the deed of foundation and elected the five-member presidium and the three-member supervisory committee.

October 25, 2001 Romanian PM Adrian Năstase announced that in two weeks Romania would send a package of measures to the authorities in Budapest, the aim of which would be to settle the Romanian-Hungarian diplomatic disputes aroused by the entry into force of the status law in the following year. The Romanian PM suggested that the provision restricting the number of employees in the Romanian-Hungarian bilateral treaty on employment should be annulled and that the direct references to employment benefits granted to Hungarian nationals in the status law should also be eliminated.

October 26, 2001 Following the fourth session of the Hungarian Standing Conference, foreign state secretary Zsolt Németh claimed that the report of the Venice Commission was by all means a victory, but it was not necessarily a victory of Hungary or Romania, rather that of the European minorities. According to the state secretary anybody who declares themselves Hungarian or who speaks Hungarian or who is a member of a Hungarian organisation, historical church and who is registered as Hungarian by the state concerned might receive a Hungarian Certificate.

October 29, 2001 Without mentioning Hungary by name the OSCE criticised the Hungarian status law as a source of conflicts. A couple of hours later the spokesman of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry denied that the document concerned Hungary.

October 31, 2001 Foreign minister Eduard Kukan expressed his standpoint in a letter sent to Walter Schwimmer, the secretary-general of the Council of Europe, Günter Verheugen, the Commissioner for Enlargement of the EU, Rolf Ekeus, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and Jozef Markuš, the Slovak ambassador in Budapest. In its statement given to the Slovak press office the Slovak Foreign Ministry insisted on Budapest having to harmonise the status law with the report of the Venice Commission.

In Budapest Gábor Horváth, the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, declared that there was no need to postpone the coming into force of the act on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries. As opposed to this, in Paris at the session of the Legal and Human Rights Committee of the Council of Europe, Erik Jürgens, the Dutch rapporteur, announced that the document treating the status law and similar European legislation would be finished by the middle of January and that it was necessary that the status law should not enter into force until then.

In Bratislava Tibor Szabó, the chairman of the Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad, and Jaroslav Chlebo, Slovak foreign state secretary, discussed questions related to the status law. According to Szabó the Slovak foreign state secretary had received favourably the Hungarian press conference on the implementation of the status law. Answering the Slovak objections Szabó told his partner that the Hungarian state would grant benefits including cultural-educational ones exclusively through foundations and non-governmental organisations, and that consequently it would not provide support directly.

November 7, 2001 In Strasbourg foreign minister János Martonyi discussed the status law with Bruno Haller, the secretary-general of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and

Rolf Ekeus, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. Martonyi asked the two organisations to do everything they could on a political level in order that in concrete questions the neighbouring countries criticising the Hungarian act in general showed inclination to consult Budapest and to come to an agreement on the merits.

November 9, 2001 At its two-day session in Budapest the leadership of the European People's Party - European Democrats faction in the European Parliament agreed that the Hungarian status law contributed to maintaining the cultural – linguistic diversity of Europe. At the press-conference following the session, Wim van Velzen, deputy-chairman of the People's Party, claimed that they had been persuaded about the importance of the act, and they had got to know its background and objectives.

November 13, 2001 The European Commission's country monitoring report on Hungary warned that Hungary, by the time of its accession to the Union at the latest, should adjust the status law to community law since the act was not in compliance with the principle of non-discrimination set forth in the Treaty on the European Union. According to the Commissioner for Enlargement the country report did not mean any change in the opinion of the Commission concerning the Hungarian status law. Günter Verheugen said that it would turn out only through its implementation whether the status law complied with minority protection standards in Europe.

November 14, 2001 The Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Slovenian Parliament continued to discuss the status law. Chairman Jelko Kacin, a member of the governing LDS, said that the conditions of implementation of the act on Hungarians in Slovenian were established by agreements concluded by the two countries, bilateral agreements on the protection of minorities and the activities of the joint committee of minority issues.

November 21, 2001 The Government issued its decree No. 222/2001. (XI.17.) on the amendments to Decree No. 90/1992. (V.29.) of the Government on the Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad, as well as its Resolution No. 2332/2001. (XI.21.) on certain tasks related to the healthcare of persons falling under the scope of the Act on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries.

November 22, 2001 The standpoint of Hungary and Slovakia drew closer in Bratislava when discussing the status law. Zsolt Németh, Foreign State Secretary, leading the Hungarian delegation declared that there was no tension in Hungarian-Slovak relations.

November 23, 2001 In Cluj (Kolozsvár) a central body of 28 members was established to monitor the implementation of the status law in Romania. The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, the Hungarian historical churches in Romania and the Hungarian non-governmental organisations in Romania each sent 9 representatives to the body. The post of the chairman was filled by Béla Markó, the leader of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania.

November 29, 2001 Bratislava expected Budapest to take Slovak complaints into account as regards the status law and to make concessions accordingly, otherwise the Slovak Parliament would probably launch a counteraction in December. After having heard the presentation of foreign state secretary Jaroslav Chlebo, the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Parliament adopted a proposal, according to which Slovak legislation would presumably put the Hungarian status law on its agenda in December and would announce in a declaration that unless the Hungarian party took Slovak objections into account, Budapest would infringe upon the sovereignty of Slovak legislation.

November 30, 2001 Miklós Duray, the managing deputy-head of the Hungarian Coalition Party (Magyar Koalíció Pártja), announced that in accordance with the Civic Code an association of legal entities was established including members of the Hungarian Coalition Party, the Csemadok, the Boy Scout Association, the Association of Hungarian Parents in Slovakia and the Association of Hungarian Teachers in Slovakia. Rudolf Mézes was elected chairman of the association.

The draft of the enforcement provision regulating the issuance of the Hungarian Certificates was sent to the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Embassy of the Republic of Hungary.

December 1, 2001 'Hungary may modify some stipulations of the status law but only after the coming into force of the act'. This statement of foreign state secretary Zsolt Németh, who had

taken part in the round-table conference organised by the Horia Rusu Foundation, was quoted by *Adevărul*.

December 3, 2001 In Bucharest Béla Markó, the chairman of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, met Rolf Ekeus, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. The main issue at the meeting was the possibility of agreement on the status law.

In the capital of Romania Rolf Ekeus said that he would clarify his standpoint on the consolidated form of the Hungarian status law only after the results of the discussions between the Hungarian and Romanian government. He claimed to have been assured by both parties of the discreet atmosphere and the exclusion of the public from the bilateral discussions.

December 6, 2001 In Brussels Foreign Minister János Martonyi met Günter Verheugen, Commissioner for Enlargement. Verheugen suggested that the Commission had never objected to the act but that it encouraged the Hungarian Government to agree on the mode of implementation with the neighbouring countries concerned. Martonyi suggested that the European Commission could promote the agreement of the parties.

December 10, 2001 In connection to the implementation of the status law the Government issued its Decree No. 239/1996. (XII. 10.) on the amendments to the Government Decree No. 99/1996 (VII. 10.) on the foundation of the prize of the Excellent Artist of the Republic of Hungary, the Merited Artist of the Republic of Hungary and the Laurel Wreath of the Republic of Hungary. With its Decree No. 242/2001. (XII. 10.) the Government amended Decree No. 287/1997. (XII. 29.) on public transport benefits.

December 17-18, 2001 After having consulted Cristian Diaconescu, foreign state secretary representing the Romanian head of the government, Zsolt Németh, foreign state secretary representing the Hungarian Prime Minister, claimed that at the meeting in Bucharest positive steps had been taken as regards the status law. The parties had agreed to issue a memorandum of understanding which would hopefully be signed by the two prime ministers in Budapest that year.

December 21, 2001 An agreement was reached on the text of the Hungarian-Romanian Memorandum of Understanding.

December 22, 2001 In Budapest Viktor Orbán, the Hungarian and Adrian Năstase, the Romanian Prime Minister signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the two governments concerning the status law and issues of bilateral co-operation.

December 27, 2001 The Hungarian Socialist Party regretted that the Government had not asked the opinion of the socialists or any other party before signing the Romanian-Hungarian agreement concerning the status law. Trade unions also protested against the free flow of Romanian labour force into the Hungarian labour market.

December 28, 2001 Romanian foreign state secretary Cristian Diaconescu announced that the Romanian Government had adopted the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Romanian and Hungarian heads of government in Budapest on December 23, 2001 and it would be implemented on January 1, 2002.

December 29, 2001 The following decrees were issued:

- Government Decree No. 318/2001. (XII. 29.) on the procedure of issuing the Hungarian Certificate and the Hungarian Dependant Certificate
- Government Decree No. 319/2001. (XII. 29.) on student benefits of persons falling under the scope of Act LXII of 2001 on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries
- Joint Decree No. 49/2001. (XII. 29.) of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the requirements of form and content of the Certificate of persons falling under the scope of Act LXII of 2001 on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries
- Decree No. 23/2001. (XII. 29.) of the Ministry of National Cultural Heritage on the cultural benefits claimable by persons falling under the scope of Act LXII of 2001 on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries
- Decree No. 47/2001 (XII. 29.) of the Ministry of Education on the implementation of provisions related to education of Act LXII of 2001 on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries

The Alliance of Free Democrats declared that they would request the immediate convocation of the Parliament if their questions were not answered on the merits on the extraordinary session of the committee of foreign affairs on 11 January at the latest. The Free Democrats recalled that they had submitted their proposal for the immediate modification of the status law to the Parliament on December 29. The declaration pointed out that the intention of the proposal had been to divert the danger inherent in the agreement of Orbán and Năstase.

2002

January 25, 2002 The Government issued its Decree No. 2012/2002 (I. 25.) on the enforcement of support specified in Act LXII of 2001 on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries.

Rolf Ekeus, holding talks in Bratislava, referred to the Hungarian status law as unprecedented in European legislation. According to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the responsibility for national minorities rests with the country of residence. Following discussions with Eduard Kukan, Ekeus said: 'Without the consent of the other country concerned, I object to the Kin-State adopting an act that has effect outside its borders and contains elements of discrimination'. Ekeus approved of the idea of promoting the language and culture of minorities and cultural diversity but insisted on the fundamental requirement of every act on minority protection, namely that responsibility for national minorities rested with the country of residence.

January 29, 2002 In connection to the implementation of the status law the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs issued their joint Decree No. 2/2002. (I. 29.) on the amendments of Decree No. 8/1999. (XI. 10.) of the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs on the licensing of employment of foreigners in Hungary and on the amendments of Decree No. 6/1990. (XII. 29.) of the Ministry of Economy stipulating the implementation of Government Decree No. 112/1990 (XII. 23.) on the export and import of goods, services and rights representing material value. An appendix was also issued to the joint Decree No. 2/2002. (I. 29.) of the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs (appendix No. 5. to the Decree No. 8/1999. (XI. 10.) of the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs).

February 11, 2002 The decree of the Ministry of National Cultural Heritage and the Ministry of Education relating to the implementation of the status law, as well as the joint decree of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the requirements of form and content of the Hungarian Certificate and the Hungarian Dependant Certificate were issued. The questions of employment included in the Hungarian-Romanian Declaration of Co-operation shall be treated in the bilateral treaty on seasonal work.

February 18, 2002 At the session of the Hungarian-Romanian Intergovernmental Joint Committee in Budapest, foreign minister János Martonyi and Romanian foreign minister Mircea Geoana held talks. Mircea Geoana said that the relation of Romania and Hungary had overcome the crisis of the status law.

February 20, 2002 In Budapest Peter Weiss, the chairman of the foreign committee of the Slovak Parliament, suggested that Slovakia would object to the status law implemented on its territory.

February 28, 2002 Eduard Kukan implied that Bratislava continued to maintain its reservations about the status law but, at the same time, it wished to keep on negotiating with Budapest.

March 5, 2002 Romanian Foreign Minister Mircea Geoana visited Eduard Kukan, his Slovak colleague in Bratislava. At the press-conference following the talks Geoana said that Bucharest was in an advantageous position in comparison to other countries concerned since no elections would be held in Romania that year.

March 7, 2002 According to Jaroslav Chlebo, Slovak Foreign State Secretary, Bratislava was probably not going to come to an agreement with Budapest until the elections in Hungary.

March 11-12, 2002 Erik Jürgens paid a visit to Budapest and met János Martonyi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, László Kovács, President of the Hungarian Socialist Party, Zsolt Németh, Vice-President of the Alliance of Youth Democrats – Hungarian Civic Party, Kinga Gál, Deputy Head of the Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad, and István Szent-Iványi,

Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and faction leader of the Alliance of Free Democrats.

March 12, 2002 In Budapest foreign state secretary János Martonyi met Erik Jürgens, the rapporteur of the Council of Europe. The parties mutually accepted that the problems of European minorities were different, and that consequently the treatment of these required individual approaches in compliance with generally accepted human rights and the rights of minorities.

March 13, 2002 Erik Jürgens paid a visit to Bratislava and met Jaroslav Chlebo, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Peter Weiss, Chairman of the Slovak Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Eduard Kukan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic.

March 14, 2002 In an interview given to *Új Szó* in Bratislava Erik Jürgens said: 'In the Council of Europe we were surprised by Hungary's decision to adopt legislation to help Hungarians living outside its borders. Countries usually conclude treaties on minorities living in other states, if necessary acts are created later on to regulate the implementation of the treaties. This is the problem with the status law. The Council of Europe is scared that Hungary's unilateral step will lead to counteraction in other countries, for example in Slovakia and Romania. This might after all result in the minorities getting into an even worse situation. The first signs of this have already appeared. I think of those bills that the Slovak Parliament is now discussing'.

March 18, 2002 The Slovak Prime Minister stated: 'Up until now the Hungarian benefit law has not had any extraterritorial or discriminative effect in Slovakia and it does not seem to have any in the future either.' Mikuláš Dzurinda had talks in Brussels with Romano Prodi, the President of the European Commission and Günter Verheugen, Commissioner for Enlargement about Slovakia's accession to the EU. Verheugen emphasised that the Commission had not changed its mind about the benefit law. From the very start Brussels had been of the opinion that the act could be implemented only if Hungary agreed with Slovakia on the conditions of implementation.

March 19, 2002 In the European Parliament the Slovak PM said that the extraterritorial effect and the discriminative elements of the Hungarian benefit law were unacceptable for Slovakia. Mikuláš Dzurinda elaborated on the point of view of his government in the hearing held by the foreign committee of the EP. Dzurinda explained that it was these two features which fundamentally drew the line between the Hungarian status law and legislation on Slovaks living outside the borders of Slovakia.

March 20, 2002 The leader of the parliamentary group of the European Liberal Democrats upheld his standpoint according to which the benefit law did not help Hungary joining the Union. Graham Watson, the chairman of the committee of internal affairs and justice in the EP, took part in the congress of the Liberal International (?) in Budapest and gave an interview to Hungarian journalists in Brussels about the progress of enlargement. In the interview he referred to the extraterritorial nature of the status law and remarked that it did not help Hungary's European integration.

April 7, 2002 The first round of the parliamentary elections was held.

April 2002 The general elections in Hungary brought to power the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Alliance of Free Democrats.

May 9, 2002 Péter Medgyessy and László Kovács had talks in Budapest with Béla Markó, Béla Bugár and József Kasza. The Prime Ministerial candidate Medgyessy implied that certain elements of the Orbán-Năstase pact needed revision and he wished to consult the Romanian party in this regard. Markó urged that even if some elements had to be modified, the agreement should not be exposed to danger.

May 2002 Péter Medgyessy formed a new centre-left coalition government.

May 29, 2002 Mikuláš Dzurinda invited Péter Medgyessy to an official visit to Slovakia in order to talk about the amendments to the status law. Dzurinda expressed his intention to come to an agreement on the status law in order to maintain good neighbourly relations between the two countries.

June 7, 2002 By the end of May the resigning Orbán-cabinet had drafted the amendments to the benefit law and had informed the Hungarian Coalition Party about it. This was confirmed by Béla

Bugár in *Új Szó* (Slovakia); however, he also mentioned that the draft did not touch upon those provisions that Romania and Slovakia had objected to.

June 18, 2002 Adrian Năstase declared that he expected the Hungarian Government to implement the law according to the Memorandum of Understanding and to amend the status law.

June 19, 2002 Jaroslav Chlebo, foreign state secretary, gave an interview to *Új Szó* (Slovakia), in which he mentioned that in March he had conveyed his proposals concerning the status law to Zsolt Németh, who had been his partner at that time and he was still waiting for his responses. He repeated his remarks to his new partner, foreign state secretary András Bársony as well and as the co-leaders of the Slovak-Hungarian joint committee he proposed to convene a session of in Bratislava in the first half of July 2002.

June 20, 2002 Hungarian foreign minister László Kovács informed the Slovak Press Agency about his intention to gauge the situation around the status law through a quick consultation in the Slovak-Hungarian joint committee.

June 24, 2002 The Legal and Human Rights Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe began its discussion on Jürgen's report on the status law.

Secretary of state at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, András Bársony, informed the president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Peter Schieder that Hungary planned to amend the status law according to the recommendations made by the Venice Commission. Adrian Năstase welcomed the initiative of the Hungarian government.

June 25, 2002 The Legal and Human Rights Committee of the Council of Europe dismissed the report on the Hungarian status law made by Erik Jürgens and called upon the rapporteur to revise it. The Dutch rapporteur was repeatedly assigned the task of comparing the existing laws on minority protection against international practice and of assessing the Hungarian government decrees relating to the status law, which were in conformity with the recommendations made by the Venice Commission.

June 27, 2002 Rolf Ekeus, High Commissioner on National Minorities, conducted talks with Slovak officials on the status law in Bratislava.

July 1, 2002 After bilateral talks between Mikuláš Dzurinda and Péter Medgyessy in Esztergom, the parties stated that both of them had the political will to overcome the tensions raised by the status law.

July 3, 2002 The foreign secretaries of states of Slovakia and Hungary agreed in Bratislava that Hungary would modify the status law taking into account Slovakia's concerns and the recommendations of the Venice Commission.

July 6, 2002 Péter Medgyessy, the Hungarian and Adrian Năstase, the Romanian heads of government agreed in Cluj (Kolozsvár) that at the end of July the joint committee on minority affairs would start negotiations on the experiences of the implementation of the status law and its possible modifications.

July 11, 2002 In Bucharest Béla Markó informed Rolf Ekeus, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, about the co-operation with the Romanian government and his opinion about the status law.

July 12, 2002 The Prime Minister of Romania, Adrian Năstase, said that it would be desirable to freeze the implementation of the status law until the amendment of the law.

July 17, 2002 Meeting of the 5th HSC in Budapest. The participants agreed on the principles of the modification of the status law.

According to the final statement of the HSC the participants acknowledged the necessity of the amendments to the law and scheduled it to their next session.

July 30, 2002 Vilmos Szabó, the state secretary of the Office of the PM, and Cristian Diaconescu, foreign state secretary, as the co-leaders of the Hungarian-Romanian expert committee on minority affairs conducted talks on the amendment of the status law.

August 3, 2002 Peter Weiss, the leader of the Slovak delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, wrote a letter to Walter Schwimmer, Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, in which he stipulated that the amendment of the status law could be considered a solution only if it complied with international law.

August 12, 2002 At the summer conference of ambassadors, Hungarian Foreign State Secretary András Bársony announced that in October the amendment of the status law would be submitted to Hungarian legislation. The recommendations of the Venice Commission, as well as the Romanian and Slovak concerns would be taken into account and the act would be harmonised with EU legislation.

September 2, 2002 At its Paris session the legal committee of the PACE was supposed to discuss the revised version of the Jürgens report, which recommended the withdrawal of the act. Upon proposal by Romanian and Slovak representatives, however, the report was scheduled to the agenda of the January 2003 session of the assembly. Hungary promised to amend the law by January. According to Jürgens certain parts of the act were contrary to the principles of international law.

September 4, 2002 In Bratislava the status law was subject to examination by legal experts. No information was given to the press.

September 10, 2002 Rudolf Schuster, the Slovak and Ion Iliescu, the Romanian heads of state touched upon the issue of the status law in the course of their meeting in Bucharest. Schuster said that it was not about a plot against Hungary but about the protection of the citizens of both countries and the prevention of discrimination. Iliescu suggested that the status law should be amended by the Hungarian Parliament and not supplemented by government decrees.

September 11, 2002 In Bratislava József Bálint Pataki, the new chairman of the Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad, had talks with Pál Csáky. They agreed that the Slovak-Hungarian agreement had to be based on the recommendations of the Venice Commission; however, such an agreement would not have been reached by the Slovak elections.

September 12, 2002 After the meeting of the Romanian foreign state secretary, Cristian Diaconescu, and foreign state secretary Jaroslav Chlebo in Bucharest, the Romanian party announced that Romania and Slovakia wished to continue consultations with the Hungarian government on the status law based upon common grounds.

September 13, 2002 The expert committee on minority affairs of the Hungarian-Romanian intergovernmental joint commission conferred about the amendment of the status law in Gyula.

September 16, 2002 In Brussels Péter Medgyessy highlighted Hungary's will to amend the status law. Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, repeated that on this issue Hungary and Slovakia would have to come to an agreement between themselves.

In Bratislava at the summit of the heads of government of Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) member states, Péter Medgyessy talked with Adrian Năstase about continuing expert negotiations, whereas the Hungarian PM did not consult Mikuláš Dzurinda on this question.

October 2, 2002 At a meeting in Bucharest Ion Iliescu Romanian and Ferenc Mádl, the Hungarian head of state, raised the issue of the amendment of the status law. Iliescu said that the Romanian party had informed the Hungarian party about its proposals concerning the modification of the act, whereas according to Mádl the question should be discussed by the joint committee and the Hungarian party would keep the recommendations of the Venice Commission in view.

October 22, 2002 At its Budapest session the political committee of the PACE met András Bársony, the Hungarian Foreign State Secretary. Bársony said that in two weeks' time the Hungarian government would complete and submit to the Parliament the draft of the amendment. The Council of Europe called upon Budapest to modify this legal norm after consultations with its neighbours. Bársony answered that the Hungarian government had been conducting negotiations for two months. Csaba Tabajdi, a member of the Hungarian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe remarked that Hungary was capable of solving this question on a bilateral level and expressed his hope that the issue of the status law would not be subject to discussion at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in January 2003.

November 17, 2002 The 6th session of the HSC took place in Budapest. The conference adopted the proposals of the delegation of the Hungarian Coalition Party concerning educational support.

Béla Bugár said that he had consulted the head of the government about the objections of the Slovak party and they had agreed on a compromise.

November 25, 2002 In Budapest Mikuláš Dzurinda, the Slovak Head of Government, stated that Slovakia basically disapproved of the status law and its planned amendments. The meeting of Péter Medgyessy and Mikuláš Dzurinda in Budapest was a failure. Dzurinda did not deny that he had agreed on a common standpoint with Adrian Năstase at the meeting of prime ministers in Warsaw a few days earlier. Medgyessy announced that following the talks with Dzurinda and Năstase he considered it necessary to convene the HSC.

November 25-26, 2002 Visit of Latchezar Toshev, rapporteur of the Political Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe PA to Hungary. During his visit he discussed with József Bálint-Pataki, president of the Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad, Zsolt Németh, Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs, Vilmos Szabó, Secretary of State, responsible for the Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad, András Bársony, Political State Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and Csaba Tabajdi.

November 28, 2002 In Brussels Pál Csáky, deputy head of the government, conducted talks with Günter Verheugen, Commissioner for Enlargement. Verheugen stated that the Hungarian status law had to comply with the recommendation of the Venice Commission. It could be implemented only if the two neighbouring countries agreed on it. Nevertheless, he encouraged Hungary and Slovakia to come to an agreement as soon as possible.

November 29, 2002 The Slovak government suggested that it was ready to give an opinion on the status law if its problematic parts were cancelled. According to its statement, Slovakia downright rejected the status law but it did not refuse to carry on negotiations with Hungary originating in the bilateral treaty on the promoting of the cultural and linguistic identity of Hungarians in Slovakia.

In Budapest Adrian Năstase and Péter Medgyessy agreed that the foreign ministers of the two countries would discuss the possible modification of the status law. The Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the Government of Romania and the Government of the Republic of Hungary was signed.

November 30, 2002 The Hungarian Coalition Party responded to the unsuccessful negotiation of the Hungarian and Slovak prime ministers in a statement. The Hungarian Coalition Party regretted that in spite of the mutually agreed solution Mikuláš Dzurinda presented an altogether different position.

December 2, 2002 Günter Verheugen, the Commissioner for Enlargement, expressed his concern about the continuing tension between Hungary and Slovakia because of the status law.

December 4, 2002 Erik Jürgens, the rapporteur of the human rights committee of the PACE had negotiations in Bratislava and learnt about the position taken by Bratislava in the dispute over the status law. He met Mikuláš Dzurinda, Prime Minister of Slovakia, Eduard Kukan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, Béla Bugár, Vice-Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Gyula Bárdos, Faction Chairman of the Hungarian Coalition Party, and Árpád Duka-Zólyomi, member of the Slovak Delegation to PACE – Party of Hungarian Coalition.

Budapest sent an answer to the Slovak concerns which Dzurinda had conveyed to the Hungarian head of government at their meeting in Budapest on 26 November.

December 5, 2002 Erik Jürgens paid a visit to Budapest where he had talks with Csaba Tabajdi, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Delegation of Hungary to PACE, László Kovács, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Vilmos Szabó, Political Secretary of State, responsible for minority affairs, Katalin Szili, Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, and József Bálint-Pataki, President of the Government Office for Hungarians Living Abroad.

December 6, 2002 Eric Jürgens visited Bucharest and met Adrian Năstase, Prime Minister of Romania, Béla Markó, president of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania and the members of the Romanian Parliamentary Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe under the chairmanship of Ionel Olteanu.

December 11, 2002 Under the leadership of László Kovács, who is also the chairman of the Socialist Party, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs paid a visit to Bucharest. This visit forecasted the general agreement between the two governments on amending the status law.

An agreement was reached at the meeting of László Kovács, the Hungarian and Mircea Geoana, the Romanian foreign minister on the principles of the amendment of the status law.

December 13, 2002 At the Copenhagen EU summit Hungary was invited to join the EU in 2004.

December 15, 2002 In a letter to the heads of government of the three countries concerned, Commissioner for Enlargement Günter Verheugen wrote that the status law was not compatible with community law, not even in its amended form.

December 18, 2002 The Hungarian government adopted the basic principles of the amendment of the status law.

January 27, 2003 The Slovak and Romanian delegation to the PACE had urged to put the issue of the status law on the agenda of the assembly but since the majority had rejected it, it was ultimately not included in the programme of the session.

March 20-21, 2003. Latchezar Toshev, rapporteur of the Political Affairs Committee of the PACE paid a visit to Bucharest. During the visit he had talks with Gheorghii Prisacaru, chairman of the Romanian parliamentary delegation to the PACE, Mihnea Motoc, Secretary of State, and Bogdan Aurescu, Director General for Legal Affairs.

April 18, 2003 Experts of the HSC discussed the working paper of the amendment of the status law.

April 2003 The referendum overwhelmingly approved Hungary's membership of an enlarged EU. However, turnout was only 46%.

May 13, 2003. With regard to the status law, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's report observed: "The Council of Europe, and public international law in general, is based on the concept of "state" and "citizenship". This leaves no room for the concept of "nation".

May 24, 2003 At the opening of the 7th session of the Hungarian Standing Conference, Ferenc Mádl President of the Republic of Hungary insisted on the reference to the homogeneous Hungarian nation and on the Hungarian Certificate in the status law.

June 6, 2003 After the inauguration of the Vállaj-Csanálos border station, Péter Medgyessy, the Hungarian and Adrian Năstase, the Romanian Prime Minister talked about the status law soon to be amended.

June 23, 2003 Parliament amended the status law on work, health and travel benefits for ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring countries. 195 members of parliament supported the amendments to the law, while 173 deputies from opposition parties rejected the changes.

June 24, 2003 In a declaration the Slovak government rejected the Hungarian status law, arguing that it was contrary to the Slovak standpoint even with the amendments.

June 25, 2003 In Strasbourg the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted the report on the status law.

July 18, 2003 In Bucharest the Hungarian and Romanian parties agreed on the implementation of the status law in Romania. The agreement would come into force when approved of by the two governments and upon its entry into force; the Memorandum of Understanding signed in December 2001 by the Hungarian and Romanian prime ministers concerning the status law should terminate its validity.

July 19, 2003 In Bratislava László Kovács and Eduard Kukan agreed that Hungary would be entitled to grant benefits for the promotion of the cultural and linguistic identity of Hungarians in Slovakia based upon the Hungarian-Slovak basic treaty and not upon the status law.

August 9, 2003 Adrian Năstase announced that on the model of the Hungarian status law Romania would create an act on supporting the cultural identity of Romanians living outside its borders.

September 23, 2003 The agreement between the Government of Romania and the Government of the Republic of Hungary on the conditions of implementation of the status law was signed in Bucharest.

November 29, 2003 The Romanian government approved of the bilateral agreement on the implementation of the amended status law in Romania.

December 12, 2003 In Brussels László Kovács, the Hungarian and Eduard Kukan, the Slovak Foreign Minister signed the bilateral agreement on the educational and cultural support of the Slovak minority living in Hungary and the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia.

May 1, 2004 Hungary joined the EU.

(Translated by Ivett Császár)