

Nationality Spokespersons' Activity and Their Impact on Parliament Agenda in Hungary

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Abstract

The claim of nationalities in Hungary for parliamentary representation occurred since the change of regime in 1989. Moreover, a law ensuring special representation to them had been adopted in 1990 but put out of effect before its application. Although the claim of the nationalities for special parliamentary representation never disappeared, an amendment of the Constitution was adopted only in 2010, but it never entered into force. The 2011 electoral law ensured a special parliamentary representation to nationalities. According to this law voters can cast two votes: one on a candidate in a single-member constituency one on a national list. National lists may be party lists or nationality lists. If votes cast on a nationality list meet a certain preferential quota, one preferential mandate can be obtained. If a nationality list does not meet this quota, the first candidate on the list represents the national minority as a nationality spokesperson having less competence than MPs. After the adoption of this law, some were concerned about that this Act would not ensure effective representation to the nationalities. During the 2014 general elections, registration data and the attendance of minority voters strengthened these concerns. No special minority mandate had been acquired, so the nationalities are represented in the Parliament merely by nationality spokespersons. Did the nationalities have any chance to acquire any parliamentary mandate? Can they influence legislation? Do they have a role in parliament agenda setting? Did the budgetary subsidy ensured for nationalities and nationality self-governments increase? How broad activity do the nationality spokespersons compared to their rights perform in the Parliament? How many of the committee of nationalities' proposals are adopted? Do nationality spokespersons use questions differently than MPs? This paper is aimed at finding the answers to all of these questions.

Keywords: nationality, National Assembly, representation, suffrage, equality, voting, minority, substantive representation

1. Introduction

A claim for the parliamentary representation of national minorities had been occurring since the change of regime in Hungary (Dobos, 2011: 168-170; Pap, 2007: 233-245; Majtényi, 2010: 92-94). In spite of that fact it has been ensured to the 13 acknowledged nationalities merely in 2011. Several scholars argued before the 2014 elections that members of the nationalities are not likely to gain even one preferential seat, so members of nationalities will be represented only by nationality spokespersons having less competence than MPs (Balázs, 2014; Erdős, 2013:5.; Kurunczi, 2013; Szalayné, 2014:13; See also: Kurunczi, 2014), and their concerns were not unfounded. To examine this question an overview of the emergence of the issue of parliamentary representation of national minorities in Hungary has to be provided. The activity of nationality spokespersons will be examined as well in order to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the recent system of minority representation in Hungary at the parliamentary level. We seek for an answer to the question to what extent can the representation of minorities in the Assembly be evaluated as beneficial. In order to fulfil this criterion three questions will be examined: How many times do issues concerning minorities in the National Assembly emerge among interpellations, questions, urgent questions, accordingly pre- and post-agenda speeches compared to the parliamentary cycle 2010-2014? How has the occurrence of this issue among laws changed compared to the parliamentary cycles since the change of regime? Did the amount and proportion of budgetary subsidies provided to nationalities increase since nationality spokespersons are present in the parliament? Before we would answer these questions, some theoretical and methodological statements have to be done.

2. Representation of minorities, substantive and descriptive representation

Will Kymlicka (1995) gave one of the most systematic theory and categorization of minority rights (Heywood, 2012: 320). He defined three groups of minority rights: self-government rights, polyethnic rights and representation rights (Kymlicka, 1995: 26-33). He also emphasises that it is important to make a difference between national minorities and ethnic groups, which question – according to him – is neglected in the literature (Kymlicka, 1995:20). He defines nation as ‘an intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history’ (Kymlicka, 1995: 18). In his point of view, national minorities, that is territorially concentrated indigenous peoples having a common language and conducting a ‘meaningful way of life across the full range of human activities’ are entitled to have self-government rights (Kymlicka, 1995: 18; 27-30; 76; Heywood, 2012: 320). Polyethnic rights are aimed at supporting immigrant ethnic groups and religious minorities to maintain and express their ‘cultural particularity and pride’ (Kymlicka, 1995: 30-31; Heywood, 2012:320). The most important type of minority rights is the third type mentioned: special representation rights which are claimed not only by national minorities and ethnic groups, but also by non-ethnic social groups (Kymlicka, 1995:31-33). Connected to the latter, it is worth to take a look at the theories concerning the relation between substantive and descriptive representation.

Parliamentary representation of national minorities means the erosion of the principle of popular representation. The assumption that persons belonging to a minority represent the members of the minority serves as a basis of the special representation. Other argument for such a representation is that minorities are not capable of getting into the parliament when no special rules concerning their representation exist. Pitkin (1967) differentiated formal, descriptive and symbolic representation according to the characteristics of representation. The idea of

substantive representation is based on an ‘acting for’ approach, which assumes that MPs would act with respect to the interest of their voters. On the basis of that fact, Sebök (2015:8) describes this theory as the predecessor of the mandate model of democracy.

Nowadays there is a widespread discourse in the scientific literature whether descriptive representation – matching the proportion of MPs belonging to a certain social group to the proportion of the social group in the society – is a precondition of substantive representation, which means the occurrence of the interest of the certain social groups during the decision-making process (Várnagy – Ilonszki 2012, 9; see also Mansbridge 1999). This question is often examined concerning the representation of Latin Americans and African Americans in the Congress of the United States, (Minta 2009), and in US member states’ legislations as well (Ueda, n.d.). Studies concerning substantive representation of minorities in other countries also exist (Bird, 2011, Rocha et. al., 2010, Hodžić – Mraović, 2015; Zuber, 2015; Jusić – Stojanović, 2015). Substantive representation of women is a popular research topic as well (Childs, 2008; Celis, 2009; Chaney, 2006; Celis – Childs, 2012; Garboni, 2015). At the same time, researches concerning substantive representation of disabled people also have been conducted (Chaney, 2015). Although nationality spokespersons may speak in the Parliament merely concerning issues related to nationalities,¹ it is worth to examine, whether minority member MPs’ and minority spokespersons’ patterns of questioning differ, and whether the topic of questions of MPs belonging to different national minorities differ from each other or not. First of all, the methodology of the research shall be outlined.

3. Methodology

Since the aim of the establishment of the institution called nationality spokesperson was to provide a preferential representation for national minorities in the Parliament, the parliament agenda will be examined to answer the question whether this aim has been reached or not. First of all, we outline the legal background of the parliamentary representation of persons living in Hungary and belonging to one of the 13 acknowledged nationalities. After that, the activity of nationality spokespersons will be analysed based on the data to be found on the webpage of the National Assembly. Data concerning the occurrence of the issue of nationalities on the parliament agenda among parliamentary questions (interpellations, questions and urgent questions), laws, and the subsidies provided to the nationalities’ culture and self-governance before and after 2015 will be analysed.²

During the research on the changes in the number of interpellations, questions, urgent questions the search tool of the webpage of the Hungarian National Assembly will be used.³

¹ Act 36 of 2012 on the National Assembly 22. § ; 29-29/A. §

² The 2015 Central Budget was the first Central Budget adopted during the first parliamentary cycle of nationality spokespersons,

³ Felszólalások keresése 2010-2014

http://www.parlament.hu/orszaggyulesi-naplo-elozo-ciklusbeli-adatai?p_auth=rJ9fFnjl&p_p_id=pairproxy_WAR_pairproxyporlet_INSTANCE_9xd2Wc9jP4z8&p_p_lifecycle=1&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1&_pairproxy_WAR_pairproxyporlet_INSTANCE_9xd2Wc9jP4z8_pairAction=%2Fintern-et%2Fcplsql%2Fwebpar.paramform%3Fp_ckl%3D39%26p_modul%3DNAPLO_ALT_LEKER%26p_szulo%3D-6 (Downloaded:20 December 2015),

Felszólalások keresése 2014–

<http://www.parlament.hu/felszolalások-keresese> (Downloaded: 15 May 2017),

Irományok egyszerűsített lekérdezése 2010-2014

http://www.parlament.hu/iromanyok-elozo-ciklusbeli-adatai?p_auth=px4pswMr&p_p_id=pairproxy_WAR_pairproxyporlet_INSTANCE_9xd2Wc9jP4z8&p_p_lifec

The research includes the interpellations, questions and urgent questions of the recent and the past (2010-2014) parliamentary cycle. The justification of the comparison with the 2010-2014 cycle is that there has not been passed long time by, and the composition of the legislation was similar to the recent one. One of the differences between the two cycles is that nationality spokespersons take place in the parliamentary activity as well. However, the comparison is a little complicated due to the fact that in 2012 a new act on the National Assembly has been adopted, and in 2014 a new Standing Order has been passed as well.⁴ At the same time the number of MPs decreased from 386 to 199.⁵ As a consequence of these it is worth to compare the recent and the previous cycle with regard to the issues of nationalities. This research shall later be extended to all of the cycles since the change of regime (1990).

A dictionary had been made on the stems connected to minorities and a search on these words was made with the help of the substitute character *.⁶ Interpellations, questions and urgent question are classified concerning their nationality-related content based on their titles. In absence of title or if the title did not provide satisfactory information, the content of the question was taken into account as well. Merely questions related to the rights, history, culture, representation and identity of the 13 acknowledged nationalities living in Hungary were taken into account as minority-related speeches. Speeches related to Roma people as socially and economically disadvantaged group, to protection of Hungarians living in neighbouring countries will not be examined. Neither speeches which although had a connection to minority issues but primarily belonged to another policy are considered. In case of interpellations the database⁷ of the Hungarian Comparative Agendas Project provides information as well (Boda – Sebök 2015).⁸ During the analysis it has to be considered that the CAP Policy Topics Codebook is domain-based, not issue-based.⁹ The most relevant subtopic connected to this research is ethnic minorities, ethnic discrimination and racism. That is why we will consider the data belonging to this subtopic.

The data on laws related to minorities is analysed based on the data to be found on the webpage of the National Assembly. Hence the Committee of Nationalities Living in Hungary has to deal with all proposals being in connection with minorities, we consider the adopted laws among these proposals.¹⁰ That means that we consider the same laws as minority-related as the

ycle=1&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1&pairproxy_WAR_pairproxyportlet_INSTANCE_9xd2Wc9jP4z8_pairAction=%2Finternet%2Fcpql%2Fwebpar.paramform%3Fp_ckl%3D39%26p_modul%3DROM_LEKERD_EGYSZ%26p_szulo%3D-3 (Downloaded: 20 December 2015),

Irományok lekérdezése 2014-

<http://www.parlament.hu/iromanyok-lekerdezese> (Downloaded: 14 May 2017)

⁴ 10/2014 (II. 24.) Parliamenary resolution – Standing Orders

⁵ Act 203 of 2011 on the election of the Members of the Parliament 3.§ (1)

⁶ The dictionary contained the words nationality, minority and the official and commonly used names of nationalities living in Hungary as follows : nemzetiség*, kisebbség*, romá*, roma*, cigán*, ruszin*, német*, lengyel*, ukrán*, szlovák*, szerb*, szlovén*, horvát*, örmény*, görög*, bolgár*, vend*, rác*, tót*, sváb*, oláh*.

⁷ Interpellations (1990-2014) | MTA TK CAP

<http://cap.tk.mta.hu/en/interpellations> (Downloaded: 14 May 2017)

⁸ The presented data are originally from the research "Hungarian Comparative Agendas Project, 2014-2017" funded by OTKA (ÁJP K 109303), the data are published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Social Sciences. Neither the OTKA nor the leaders of the project are responsible for the content of the presented analysis.

⁹ Policy Topics Codebook (Hungarian Policy Agendas Project)

<http://cap.tk.mta.hu/en/policy-topics> (Downloaded: 14 May 2017)

¹⁰ A bizottság által benyújtott irományok 2014- – Országgyűlés

<http://www.parlament.hu/web/magyarorszag-iromanyok-bizottsaga/a-bizottsag-által-benyujtott-iromanyok> (Downloaded: 15 May 2017),

A bizottság által tárgyalta irományok 2014- - Országgyűlés

House Committee did. Data concerning the parliamentary cycles between 1990 and 2014 are examined based on the Law database of the Hungarian Comparative Agendas Project¹¹ We also use the Minority Legislation Database of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Social Sciences Institute for Minority Studies.¹² The Data on the subsidies provided to the minorities with regard to minority rights, culture, education and self-governance are analysed based on the Hungarian Comparative Agendas Project's Database on Budgets and Final Accounts from 1991 to 2013¹³ and the Laws on the Central Budgets from 2014 to 2017.¹⁴ In case of Central Budgets adopted since 2013 the same search words were applied a sin the case of interpellations, questions and urgent questions. The budgetary subsidies connected to nationalities are identified with the help of the same searchwords that are used with regard to parliamentary questions. The amount of these subsidies is summed up, furthermore the proportion of these compared to the other earmarks counted as well. During this analysis were only budgetary subsidies with regard to minority rights, nationalities' culture, education and political participation are considered. After an overview of the methodology the light shall be shed on the legal environment of the parliamentary representation of national minorities living in Hungary.

4. Parliamentary representation of national minorities in Hungary

Although a claim for the parliamentary representation of national minorities had been occurred since the change of regime (Dobos, 2011: 168-170; Pap, 2007: 233-245, Majtényi, 2010: 92-94),¹⁵ it has been ensured to the 13 acknowledged nationalities¹⁶ (former called as 11 national and 2 ethnic minorities) living in Hungary only by the adoption of the Act 203 of 2011. No plural vote is ensured to the members of minorities. They can vote on an individual candidate and on a national list. National lists may be party lists or minority lists set by the National Nationality Self-Governments. The proposal of 1% of persons registered as minority voters – but no more than 1500 proposal – is required to establish a party list. Voters aiming to

<http://www.parlament.hu/web/magyarorszagi-nemzetisegek-bizottsaga/a-bizottsag-altal-targyalt-iromanyok>
(Downloaded: 15 May 2017)

¹¹ Laws (1990-2014) | MTA TK CAP

<http://cap.tk.mta.hu/en/law> (Downloaded: 14 May 2017)

¹² Nemzetiségi adatbázisok | Keresés a jogszabályok között

http://mtatkki.ogyk.hu/jogszabaly_adatok.php (Downloaded: 8 June 2017)

¹³ Budgets and Final Accounts (1991-2013) | MTA TK CAP

<http://cap.tk.mta.hu/en/budget1991-2013koltsegvetes> (Downloaded: 14 May 2017)

¹⁴ Act 230 of 2013 on the 2014 Central Budget of Hungary,

Act 100 of 2014 on the 2015 Central Budget of Hungary,

Act 100 of 2015 on the 2016 Central Budger of Hungary,

Act 150 of 2016 on the 2017 Cenrtal Budget in Hungary

¹⁵ Around the time and after the change of regime multiple proposals have been made, and one law has been adopted during the governance of the socialist Németh-government in 1990 (Act 17 of 1990 on the Parliamentary Representation of National and Linguistic Minorities Living in the Republic of Hungary) but has been put out of effect before it could have been applied. (Pap 2007, 233-245). This law would have ensured parliamentary representation to 8 acknowledged national and ethnic minorities. This law was modified by the Act 36 of 1990 to extend the deadline of the decision on the person of minority representatives. The Act 40 of 1990 (see 1. §, and 5.§ (2)) put the law out of effect, so it has never been applied. (Dobos 2011, 168-170.)

The Constitution of Hungary has been amended on the 25th May 2010. This modification would have guaranteed the election of maximum 13 MPs representing minorities in addition to 200 MPs. A separate law should have been adopted on the entry into force, but this law has never been adopted. (See Amendment of the Constitution Adopted on the 25th May 2010 on the Amendment of the Act 20 of 1949 on the Constitution of the Republic of Hungary 1. §, 5.§ (2))

¹⁶ In this the paper, we use the words nationality and minority as synonyms.

vote on a nationality list have to register as a minority voter. At least three candidates have to be on national lists. The candidates have to be registered as minority voters. National Nationality Self-Governments may not establish a joint nationality list, and one person may be nominated only on one national list (either on a party list or on a nationality list). One preferential seat can be obtained on each minority list reaching a preferential threshold. The general threshold has to be reached to the gaining of every other mandates. Shall the votes cast on the nationality list be too few to acquire a preferential seat, the first person on the list represents the minority as a nationality spokesperson.¹⁷

The Act on the National Assembly contains the detailed rules concerning nationality spokespersons and the parliamentary committee representing nationalities.¹⁸ Minority spokespersons have weaker competences than MPs. They cannot vote at plenary sessions (merely in the committee representing the nationalities) and they can speak up at plenary sessions only if the House Committee decides that an actual issue on the agenda is connected to the interest of nationalities or there is an extraordinary case. They can take part in advisory role at other committees' sessions if the concerned committee approves it. They can ask questions to the same persons as MPs, but only related to the rights and interests of nationalities. They also have free and – compared to each other – equal mandate. They have immunity as well.¹⁹

Several scholars turned their attention to the fact that members of national minorities do not have much chance to gain even one preferential seat (Balázs, 2014; Erdős, 2013:5.; Kurunczi, 2013; Szalayné, 2014:13; See also: Kurunczi, 2014). Erzsébet Szalayné Sándor, the vice ombudsman for minority protection even stated before the general elections of 2014 that the regulation changes the one man – one vote principle to the principle ‘one minority voter – half vote’, which means that the regulation’s effect is exactly different from its aim what was ensuring a preferential mandate to minority voters (Szalayné, 2014:13). The outcome of the 2014 election showed us, that their concerns have not been unfounded.

That is why it is worth examining in a future paper how these rules could be corrected and whether voters belonging to a national minority should be provided to cast a vote both on a nationality list and a party list in a way that on nationality lists spokespersons could be elected. This option would lead to the correction of the recent regulation only if the activity of nationality spokespersons will be proven as efficient. That is why the activity of nationality spokespersons shall be examined.

5. Activity of nationality spokespersons

We examine the number and topic of speeches and questions of nationality spokespersons based on the data to be found on the webpage of the Hungarian National Assembly,²⁰ from a different perspective than Sándor Móré did it (Móré, 2016). Figure 1 shows the number of speeches and questions performed by nationality spokespersons until the 8th of May 2017.

¹⁷ Act 203 of 2011 on the election of the Members of the Parliament 7-10.§, 16.§, 18.§, For additional information on the representation of national minorities in Hungary and its further aspects see Kurunczi, 2015; Erdős, 2013; Pap, 2013; Pap, 2014; Chronowski, 2013 and Móré, 2015.

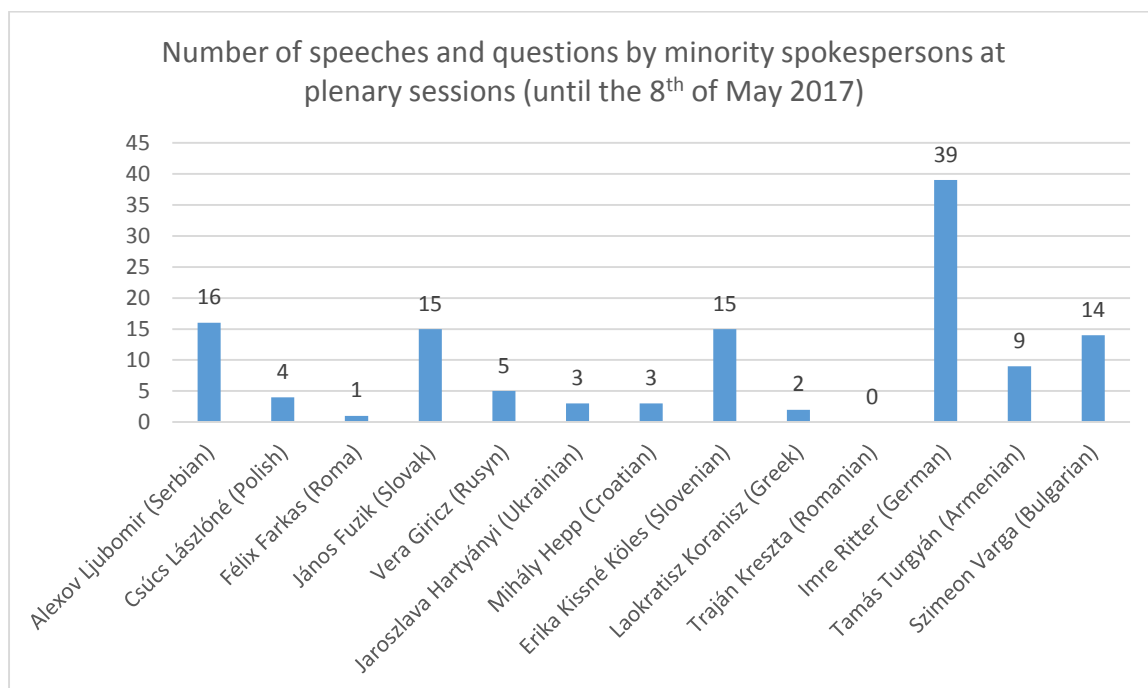
¹⁸ Act 36 of 2012 on the National Assembly. 22. § and 29-29/A. §

¹⁹ Act 36 of 2012 on the National Assembly 29-29/A. §

²⁰ Szószólók - Országgyűlés

<http://www.parlament.hu/szoszolok-listaja> (Downloaded: 15 May 2017)

Figure 1. – Number of speeches and questions by minority spokespersons at plenary sessions from the 6th of May 2017 until the 8th of May 2017



Source: Own diagram based on the data to be found at www.parlament.hu.

Imre Ritter, the German spokesperson spoke up 39 times during the examined period. Two of these are connected to an amendment of the Public Finance Act proposed by the Committee of Nationalities Living in Hungary, four to the 2014 and 2015 reports of the State Audit Office. In twenty of his speeches he dealt with the Central Budget, its amendments, accordingly with the Final Account. He spoke up two times with regard to the amendment of Public Work Act and the Act on Registry Procedure and two times concerning the Act on the Misdemeanour Procedure. Two of his speeches were connected to the Act on the National Cultural Fund and to the Act on Public Culture and further three to the report of the Ombudsman and Vice-Ombudsmen on the situation of nationalities living in Hungary. He also asked the following question: ‘*Has Hungary never been a multicultural society?*’ He performed a pre-agenda speech about the people taken into the Soviet Union for Labour Service as well.

The Serbian spokesperson Alexov Ljubomir spoke 16 times. Three of his speeches were connected to the 2015, 2016 and 2017 State Budget, three to the proposal of the Act on the Decrease of Bureaucracy in Public Administration, and two to the proposals of the Act on General Public Administration Procedure accordingly the Act on Public Administration Procedure Code, furthermore one to the proposal on the subsidies and employment rules regarding performing art organizations He held one speech connected to the criminal procedure as well. He also spoke up concerning the approval of the report of the State Audit Office on its professional activity and functioning in 2015 and the report of the Ombudsman and Vice-Ombudsmen on the situation of nationalities living in Hungary on behalf of the Committee of Nationalities Living in Hungary. He asked three questions as well, connected to the future of the nationality theatres, the opportunities of renovation of Serbian cultural and Historical memories by Serbians living in Serbia, accordingly to the Serbian Orthodox Diocese in Buda. He held a post-agenda speech as well, connected to the 575 year long cohabitation of Serbs and Hungarians.

He is followed by the Slovenian Spokesperson Erika Kissné Köles and the Slovak spokesperson János Fuzik. Both of them spoke up 15 times. Six of János Fuzik's speeches were performed on behalf of the nationality committee: he held an opening speech and gave an answer connected to both of the Amendment of the Act on the Electoral Procedure and the Amendment of the Act on the National Assembly, and he spoke up connected to the report of the Ombudsman and Vice-Ombudsmen two times. He made two additional speeches connected to the amendment of the Act on the National Assembly. One of his speeches concerned the 2017 Central Budget. Three post-agenda speeches of him were connected to the Memorial Day of Hungarian Deported from the Hungarian Highlands and the Czechoslovak-Hungarian population exchange, to the people taken into the Soviet Union for Labour Service and one to the joint drill of the armed forces of the Visegrád countries. One of his speeches concerned the amendment of the law on museums, public libraries and public collections. Twelve of his speeches were performed until the 15th of December 2015 and his remaining three speeches were performed in May and June 2016, furthermore in May 2017.

. Two of Erika Kissné Köles's speeches dealt with the 2015 and 2017 Central Budget, nine were related to the public education, professional education and adult education. She held two post-agenda speeches dealing with the vital issues, past, present and future of Slovenians, and with the work of Ágoston Pável, a researcher of the Slovenian living in Hungary. She performed a pre-agenda speech – in Slovenian language from the beginning to the end – to the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Slovenian Constitution. She also spoke up with regard to NGOs getting subsidies from abroad.

The Bulgarian spokesperson Szimeon Varga held 14 speeches during the examined period of time. Four of Varga's speeches are connected to the Central Budget, in three more speeches he dealt with the Act on the National Asset, one additional speech was performed by him related to the Act on Public Finances and its amendments. He spoke up two times with regard to the report of the Ombudsman and Vice-Ombudsmen on the situation of nationalities living in Hungary. He performed a pre-agenda speech connected to a certain Bulgarian folk tradition and two post-agenda speeches connected to the 'past present and future of the Bulgarians living in Hungary' and to the honour of the centenary of the Hungarian Bulgarian Orthodox Church's establishment. He held an opening speech on a resolution proposal on the Day of Bulgarian-Hungarian Friendship.

Tamás Turgyán, the Armenian spokesperson spoke up nine times. Two of his speeches were in connection with the Amendment of the Act on the National Assembly and two with the Amendment of the Act on Consular Protection. He also held five post-agenda speeches, one on the Memorial Day of the Martyrs of Arad, two on the Armenian genocide, one on the conflicts between persons and groups belonging to Armenian minority and on Armenian language, furthermore one on the 25th anniversary of the Declaration of Armenia's independence.

The Rusyn spokesperson Vera Giricz held five speeches. Four of these were performed on behalf of the Committee of Nationalities Living in Hungary connected to the 2013 and 2015 report of the Ombudsman and Vice-Ombudsmen on the situation of nationalities living in Hungary. She also held a post-agenda speech with the title 'Ferencz Rákóczi II and the Rusyns'.

The Polish spokesperson Csúcs Lászlóné performed four speeches. Her first speech was connected to a resolution proposal introduced by her and László Kövér to the 70th anniversary of the death of Henryk Slavik and the 40th anniversary of the death of József Antall sr. Two of her speeches were in connection with the decree resolution on the declaration of the year 2016 to the year of Polish-Hungarian friendship. She was one of the introducers of this resolution proposal as well. In one of her speeches she dealt with the Year of Polish-Hungarian Solidarity

and the revolution in 1956. The Croatian spokesperson Mihály Hepp spoke three times at the plenary sessions, once connected to the Microcensus, and two times connected to the national values and Hungaricums. It is important to mention that he has not spoken since the 8th June 2015 at all.

The Greek spokesperson Koranisz Laokratisz had two speeches concerning the Amendment of the Act on Hungarian National Values and Hungaricums, furthermore the Amendment of the Act on Registry Procedure and the Act on Public Work. Approximately two years passed since his last speech. Three Speeches can be connected to the Ukrainian spokesperson Jaroslava Hartyányi. At the first time, she held a report on the activity of the Committee of Nationalities living in Hungary during the first year of its functioning. In September 2016 she performed a pre-agenda speech again. This speech was connected to Ukrainian-Hungarian relations. She also spoke up with regard to the census. The Roma spokesperson Félix Farkas spoke merely one time, connected to the 2015 Central Budget. The Romanian Spokesperson Traján Kreszta performed no speeches at plenary sessions yet.

Merely the Roma and Armenian spokespersons were who used only Hungarian language during their speeches, but it is important to mention that in the case of these minorities Hungarian language is acknowledged as nationality language as well.²¹ Most of the spokespersons started their speeches in their mother tongue and they changed to Hungarian after a short introduction. The Polish spokesperson Csúcs Lászlóné made this differently at the first time: she started her speech in Hungarian then she finished it in Polish. The Slovenian Spokesperson held one of her speeches – to the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Slovenian Constitution in Slovenian from the beginning to the end.

We can see that activity of nationality spokespersons varies within a wide range even if we consider the fact that some of the spokespersons (e.g. Imre Ritter) spoke more than others due to the fact that they got the role to outline the opinion of the Committee of Nationalities Living in Hungary or to hold an opening speech to the bills introduced by the Committee. Traján Kreszta did not have a speech at plenary sessions yet. The rest of the spokespersons can be categorised into three groups. Some of them perform speeches more or less constantly. Others spoke more in the beginning of the parliamentary cycle but after a while their enthusiasm decreased – in some cases absolutely. The third group consists of the spokespersons who started to speak more frequently since the beginning of the second half of the parliamentary cycle.

If we want a basis of adequate comparison, we also have to take a look at the activities of MPs. With no regard to technical and agenda –related speech 21646 speeches were held in the Parliament from the beginning of this parliamentary cycle until 24th April 2017, which means that an MP or a spokesperson made approximately 102 speeches in average during the examined period of time. If we consider merely the speeches of MPs, the average is 108 speech per MP. We can see that the number of speeches of nationality spokespersons is much lower: one spokesperson spoke up 9, 38 times in average during this time. At the same time, it ought not to be forgotten that nationality spokespersons may speak on plenary sessions only if the House Committee considers that an actual topic is related to nationalities and that nationality spokespersons have tighter competences than MPs.

In the further part of the paper it will be examined how often had minority issues occurred among interpellations, questions, urgent questions, furthermore pre- and post-agenda speeches during the 2010-2014 parliamentary cycle and since the beginning of the recent parliamentary cycle (2014).

²¹ Act 179 of 2011 on the Rights of Nationalities 22.§ (1)

6. The issue of minorities among interpellations, questions, urgent questions, pre-and post-agenda speeches before and after 2014

The analysis of the nationality spokespersons' impact on the legislative agenda involves the comparison of the 2010-2014 cycle and the recent cycle with regard to minority-related issues occurring in interpellations, questions, and urgent questions. As a result of this comparison we can conclude that there have been merely two interpellations in the last cycle which fulfils our criteria. These interpellations can be connected to the Jobbik and were submitted in 2010 and 2013. If we take a look at the Hungarian Comparative Agendas Project Interpellation Database,²² it shows us that 13 interpellations were born during this period of time with regard to the subtopic ethnic minorities, ethnic discrimination and racism. The difference between the numbers is caused by the fact that in this paper we did not consider topics related to Roma as a socially disadvantaged group and the so-called 'gipsy crimes' as being minority-related, while the CAP codebook does it so.²³ Based on the webpage of the National Assembly and the CAP Hungary Interpellation Database we can see that 957 interpellations were held during the parliamentary cycle 2010-2014, while in the recent cycle 1173 interpellations had been submitted and 693 of these were held until the 8th May 2017.

One of the present cycle's two minority-related interpellations mentioning minority and ecclesiastic nurseries was performed by István Soltész, an MP belonging to the Christian Democratic Party with regard to the nursery system, and another interpellation on EU funds connected corruption mentioned the misuses within the National Roma Self-Government. At the same time we have to consider that nationality spokespersons are not entitled to hold interpellations, and in addition, one more year is left from the cycle. In spite of that, in case of questions a moderate increase started.

While merely two out of the 8494 questions during the last parliamentary cycle had been directly connected to minorities, nine out of the 11402 questions submitted (and 890 held out of them) during the present parliamentary cycle until 8th May 2017 were in direct relation with minorities. Three of the latter were performed by the Serb spokesperson, one by the German spokesperson, one by an MP belonging to the party Politics Can Be Different and four by members of the Hungarian Socialist Party. We cannot neglect to mention that three of the latter questions were imposed by László Teleki, former secretary of state responsible for Roma issue, who had been the member of the Zala County Roma Minority Self-Government between 2010 and 2014. The fourth question performed by members of the Hungarian Socialist Party was performed by Anita Heringes, who referred to her German ancestors during her speech. Based on the above mentioned things we can conclude that no significant increase of minority-related questions has been occurred since the establishment of the institution of nationality spokespersons.

Four out of the 1307 urgent questions performed during the 2010-2014 cycle were expressively related to minorities. 1229 urgent questions were performed in the present cycle until 8th May 2017. Sixteen of these were performed with regard to minorities. The minority-related urgent questions by two members of the party Politics Can Be Different István Ikotity and Ákos Hadházy, five by László Teleki former secretary of state and three by the representatives of Jobbik. If we merely look at the numbers we may assume that the increase

²² Interpellations (1990-2014) | MTA TK CAP
<http://cap.tk.mta.hu/en/interpellations> (Downloaded: 14 May 2017)

²³ Policy Topics Codebook (Hungarian Policy Agendas Project)
<http://cap.tk.mta.hu/en/policy-topics> (Downloaded: 14 May 2017)

of the minority-related urgent questions is caused by the occurrence of nationality spokespersons, but we have to be careful with such statements. If we take a look at the content of these speeches as well, we can see that twelve out of these fourteen urgent questions were performed in relation with an actual issue, the corruption, financial misuses and breaches of law in the National Roma Self-Government. One additional urgent question concerned the remuneration of Flórián Farkas ministerial commissioner responsible for subsidies provided for Roma. One more of these questions was in relation with the financial misuses of a fund connected to misuse of subsidies of alleged Roma minority education.²⁴ One of the remaining two concerned urgent questions dealt with the quality education of Roma people, another dealt with the problem that local governments and nationality self-governments cannot access their financial resources provided by the state.

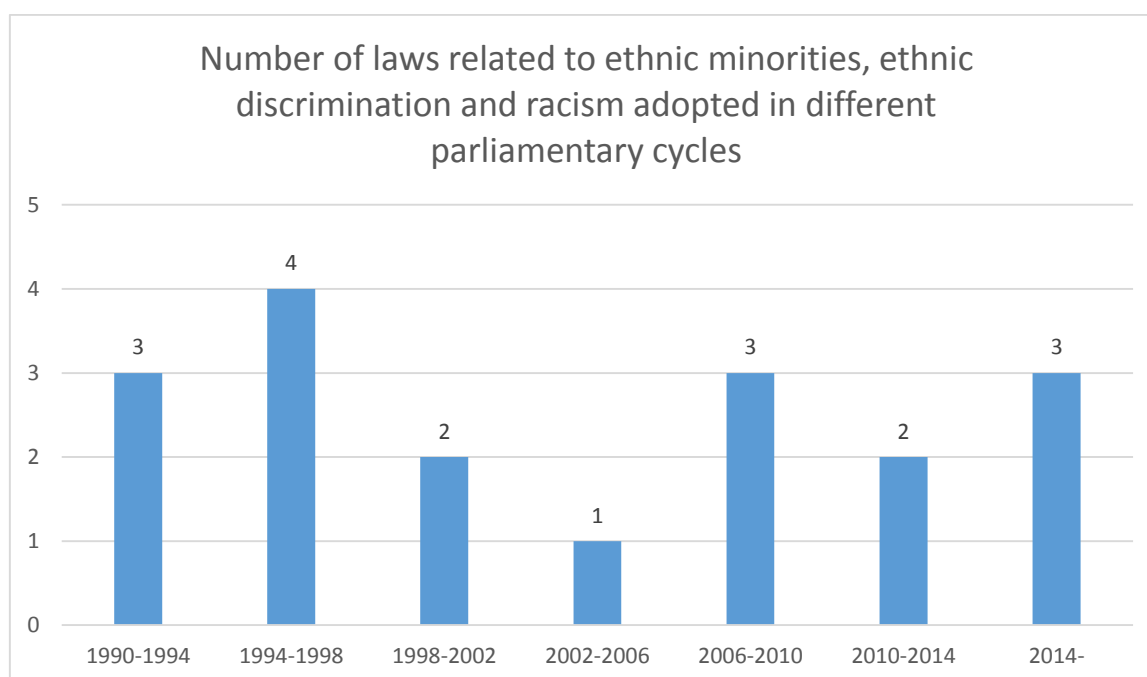
Based on the above mentioned things we can conclude that the quantity and proportion of interpellations, questions and urgent questions dealing with minority issues did not increase, moreover, a decrease can be seen in case of interpellations. With no respect to the questions which are available to nationality spokespersons as well and show a slight increase, we could see that the growth is caused by an actual issue, the corruption scandal surrounding the National Roma Self-Government. As a further step of the research questions, interpellations and urgent questions shall be analysed more widely to make definite statements concerning the impact of nationality spokespersons on the legislative agenda. As a next step it will be examined whether the number of minority-related legislation shows an increase since 2014 or not.

7. Minority-related legislation before and after 2014

In the further part of the paper it is worth to take a look at the number of minority-related laws adopted in each parliamentary cycle until nowadays based on the Hungarian Comparative Agendas Project and the webpage of the National Assembly (Figure 2).

²⁴ István Ikotity Spoke up merely related to the corruption scandal of the National Roma Self-Government and his speeches are in connection with corruption in general, this topic is overridden only by education and culture. This fact is not surprising hence István Ikotity is the member of the committee responsible for culture, and public policy specialisation is a characteristic of MPs 'behaviour in connection with interpellations (Sebök et. al. 2014: 58). Due to the high number of corruption-related speeches among all of his questions we can assume that he spoke up in these questions because their connection to corruption and not to minorities.

Figure 2. – Minority-related legislation in different parliamentary cycles



Source: own diagram based on the CAP Hungary Law Database, the CAP Hungary Policy Topic Codebook and the webpage of the National Assembly²⁵

We can see that three laws belonging to the subtopic ethnic minorities, ethnic discrimination, and racism had been adopted during the parliamentary cycle 1990-1994. Four laws belonging to this topic were adopted during the 1994-1998 cycle, two during the 1998-2002 cycle, one during the 2002-2006 cycle, three in the 2006-2010 cycle and two under the 2010-2014 cycle.²⁶

According to the Minority Legal Documents Database of the Institute for Minority Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Centre for Social Sciences²⁷ the number of minority laws adopted from the beginning of the recent parliamentary cycle until the end of 2015 do not show a significant increase either (Figure 3). At the same time, we have to consider that the recent cycle has not ended yet, and that the legislation in general was very intensive during the 2010-2014 parliamentary cycle.

²⁵ If we consider merely negotiated and submitted and adopted proposals of the Committee which belong to the subtopic ethnic minorities, ethnic discrimination, racism of the CAP Hungary Policy Topics codebook, the number of such laws is 3 in the 2014- cycle.

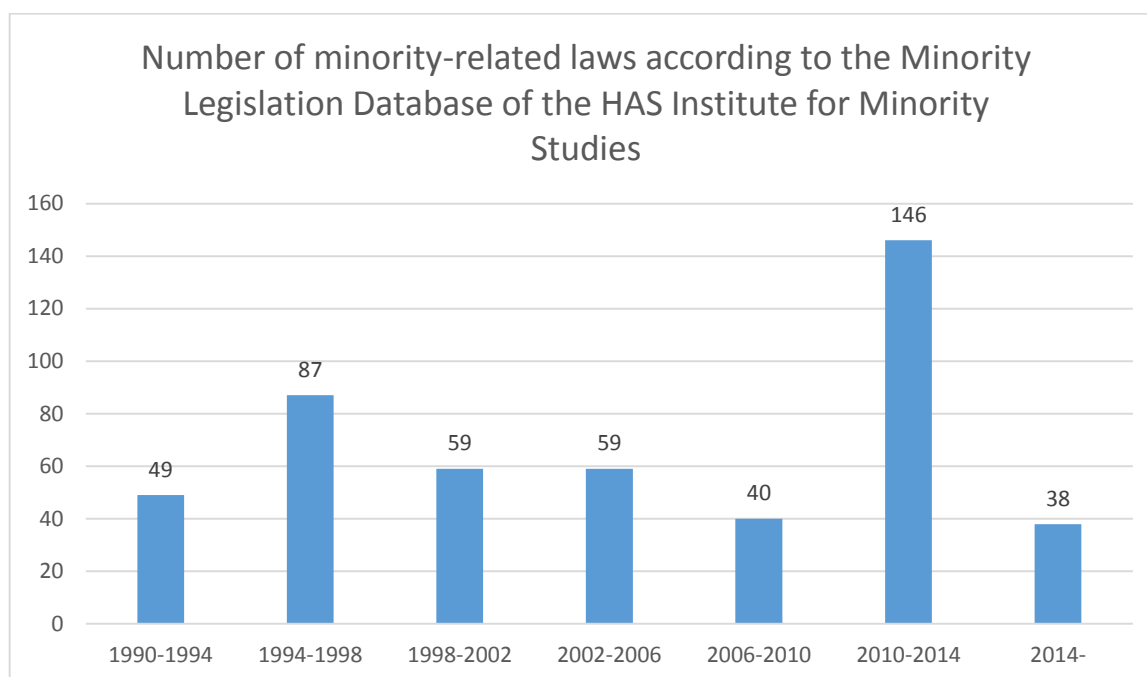
²⁶ Laws (1990-2014) | MTA TK CAP

<http://cap.tk.mta.hu/en/law> (Downloaded: 14 May 2017)

²⁷ Nemzetiségi adatbázisok | Keresés a jogszabályok között

http://mtatkki.ogyk.hu/jogszabaly_adatok.php (Downloaded: 8 June 2017)

Figure 3. – Number of minority-related laws adopted in different cycles according to the Minority Legislation Database of the HAS Institute for Minority Studies



Source: own diagram based on the Minority Legislation Database of the HAS Centre for Minority Studies²⁸

The Committee of Nationalities Living in Hungary submitted 7 bills in the present cycle until the 8th May 2017. Two of these were withdrawn and four have been adopted and promulgated. The last of these proposals was submitted on the 8th of May 2017 and the last before that had been submitted on the 10th November 2015. It is important to mention that two of the adopted proposals have the same content as the two withdrawn proposals. One of these was the amendment of the law on the National Assembly and just one aspect of this amendment dealt with the nationalities, exactly with the remuneration of nationality spokespersons. Hence the CAP Hungary Laws Database contains merely the adopted and promulgated laws, and we can consider only adopted laws as an output, it is worth to focus on adopted proposals regarding the present parliamentary cycle as well. The Committee dealt with thirty six proposals, and twenty four of these were adopted. We can assume that minority spokespersons have some impact on legislation hence all of their Committee's proposals have been adopted which are closed and are not withdrawn. To make accurate statements later it will be needed to examine whether their speeches and standpoints connected to proposals submitted by others but negotiated also by them taken into account or not.

At the same time, hence the speech possibilities of nationality spokespersons are limited, and based on the considerations of the House Committee, furthermore they cannot vote, they barely can make a direct impact on legislation. It depends on the deliberation of the House Committee, to which laws the Committee of Nationalities Living in Hungary may submit a proposal of amendment, and it depends on the majority of the MPs whether their proposals are adopted or not. At later stages of this research making the data concerning the cycles before and after 2014 more comparable is needed, just like a broader content analysis. The indirect

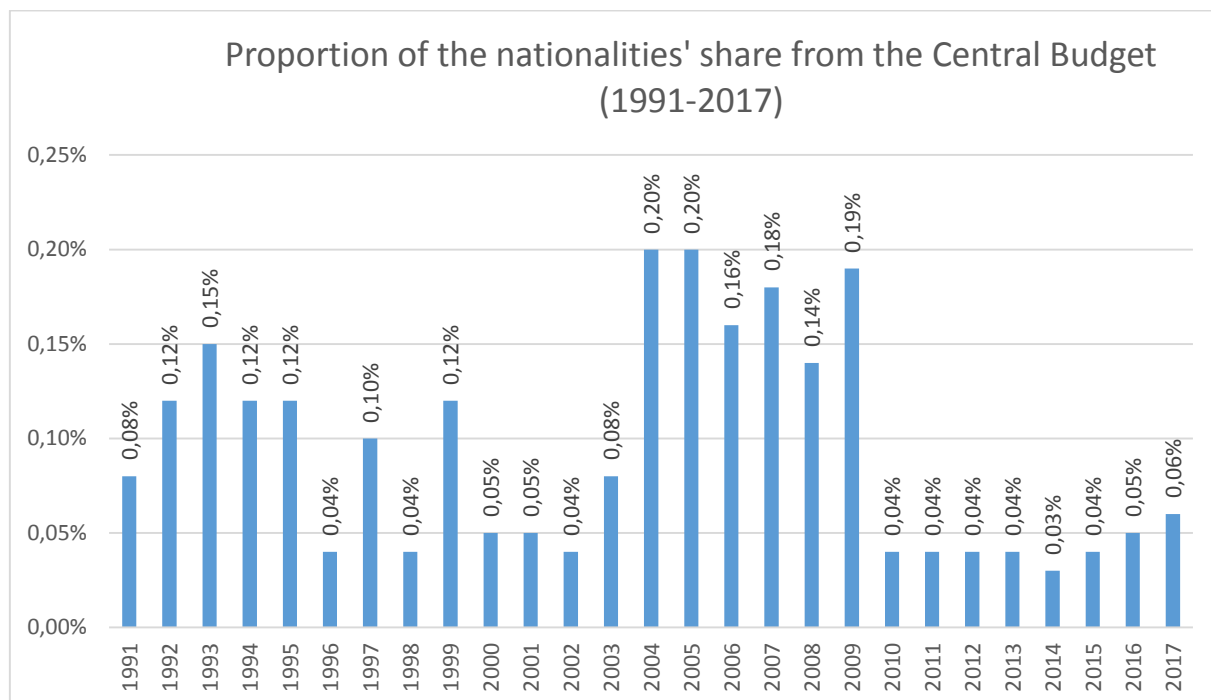
²⁸ Nemzetiségi adatbázisok | Keresés a jogszabályok között
http://mtatkki.ogyk.hu/jogszabaly_adatok.php (Downloaded: 8 June 2017)

effect of nationality spokespersons' activity on legislation shall be analysed later thoroughly as well. In the present paper we concluded further research on minority-related subsidies in Central Budget.

8. Subsidies ensured to nationalities from the Central Budget

We can draw up the proportion of minority related earmarks in the Central Budget based on the data of the Hungarian Comparative Agendas Project Central Budgets and Final Accounts Database²⁹ accordingly the Central Budgets and Final Accounts adopted after 2013³⁰ (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Proportion of the nationalities' share from the Central Budget



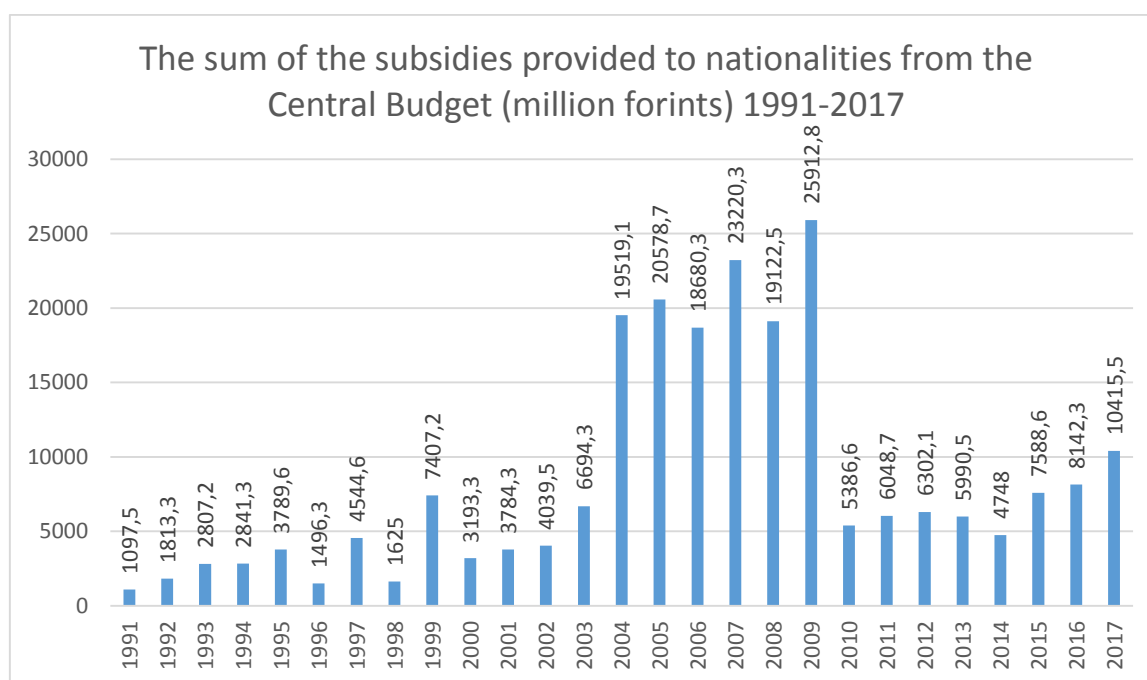
Source: own calculations based on the CAP Hungary Central Budget Database and the Central Budgets adopted since 2013

We can see that while the subsidies provided to minorities had increased until 1995 and slightly decreased in the further, in 1996 a drastic decrease occurred. After that the proportion of these subsidies compared to the total sum of the Central Budget was unequable until 1999. Between 2000 and 2002 the sum of the subsidies of minorities was low again. An increase started in 2003 and the proportion of earmarks related to minorities was relatively high between 2004 and 2009. This proportion is drastically lower since 2010 and a decrease occurred in 2014 as well. Although an increase of these subsidies occurred after 2015, the sum of these earmarks still do not reach the proportion before the economic crisis started in 2008. Not only the proportion but also the sum (Figure 5) of minority-related earmarks has to be examined.

²⁹ Budgets and Final Accounts (1991-2013) | MTA TK CAP
<http://cap.tk.mta.hu/en/budget1991-2013koltsegvetes> (Downloaded: 14 May 2017)

³⁰ Act 230 of 2012 on the 2014 Central Budget of Hungary,
 Act 100 of 2014 on the 2015 Central Budget of Hungary,
 Act 100 of 2015 on the 2016 Central Budget of Hungary,
 Act 90 of 2016 on the 2017 Central Budget of Hungary

Figure 5. – The sum of the subsidies provided to nationalities from the Central Budget



Source: own calculations based on the CAP Hungary Central Budget Database and the Central Budgets adopted since 2013

We can see that the sum of Central Budget subsidies provided to nationalities increased in the 2015 Central Budget approximately 1,6 times higher than in the 2014 Central Budget and in case of the 2016 and 2017 Central Budgets further increase can be observed. Moreover, the sum of these subsidies became as high as it has not been since 2010, and this amount is overridden merely by the sum of the subsidies provided between 2004 and 2009. Taking into account that nationality spokespersons often speak up with regard to public finances we can assume, that their presence in the Parliament had an impact on the increase of state subsidies.

9. Conclusion

We could see that a claim for ensuring a preferential parliamentary representation to members of nationalities living in Hungary can be traced back to a long history, but it became real merely in 2014. Several scholars stated when the electoral law of 2011 was adopted, that members of nationalities do not have a chance to acquire even one preferential mandate, so merely nationality spokespersons will represent them in the Parliament (except from the MP elected by them in a single member constituency), so the equality of their vote is violated. That is why we should take the possibilities to improve the system into account. One option is to maintain the institution of nationality spokespersons and allow members of nationalities to vote on both party lists and nationality list. To decide whether this solution would be satisfactory we had to clear whether nationality spokespersons can have an impact on the legislative agenda or not. To clarify this question we examined the occurrence of minority-related interpellations, questions, urgent questions and Central Budget subsidies in the past parliamentary cycle (2010-2014) and the present one (2014–), furthermore minority-related laws since the change of regime.

The conclusion is that number of interpellations, questions and urgent questions related to minority issues did not increase or decrease significantly since the nationality spokespersons started their mandate in the parliament, and where a slight increase can be observed, the

occurrence of an actual corruption issue lays behind and not the presence of the spokespersons. In the further part of the research it would be beneficial to extend the analysis to further parliamentary cycles since the change of regime and to make a more thorough content analysis. We could also see that the number of speeches heavily differs from the number of speeches performed by MPs, which is partly due to the fact that spokespersons have less scope of competence than MPs. Based on the data processed yet we can see that MPs having a minority background (e.g. László Teleki) may represent minority interests better than spokespersons. It is worth to test this hypothesis to other cycles as well, hence we can see that at the same time nationality spokespersons spoke up many times with regard to financial issues and the share of nationalities from the Central Budget increased. At the same time, based on the occurrence of corruption issues we cannot be sure that this increase is to the benefit of the members of minorities.

The activity of the Committee of Nationalities Living in Hungary shall be examined as well, just as whether there is a specialisation concerning policy areas between nationality spokespersons (we could see that e.g. Erika Kissné Köles spoke up many times concerning education). No increase in the number of laws concerning minorities can be seen, and no decisive direct impact of spokespersons can be observed on legislation. However, it has to be taken into account as well that all the four proposals submitted by the Committee were adopted (two additional proposals were withdrawn, and one more was recently submitted). It will be needed to make the data of the present and past cycles regarding laws making more comparable, and conducting a broader content analysis is also required. The occurrence of minority-related issues in media, the public opinion, the speeches of prime ministers, topics of party congresses may also provide beneficial information regarding the topic. It will be definitely needed to conclude this research again at the end of the present parliamentary cycle to have a comprehensive overview on the impact of nationality spokespersons on the legislative agenda.

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