TRANSCARPATHIA

1920–2020

Transcarpathian Hungarians in the Last 100 Years

MICHAEL RICH

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TRANSCARPATHIA 1920–2020. *Transcarpathian Hungarians in the Last 100 Years*

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Contents

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The Verecke Pass
(Photo by: Mihály Gazdag)

History

Transcarpathia, as a geographical-administrative unit, was created in 1919 as a result of peace treaties ending World War I, as a part of the (first) Czechoslovak Republic, under the name Podkarpatska Rus. A century ago, political decisions not only created the state of the Czechoslovak Republic, an administrative unit lacking historical background, but also the Hungarian national minority of Transcarpathia.

   During the 20th century, historical storms swept through what is now known as Transcarpathia: after the Hungarian Kingdom and within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, it belonged to Czechoslovakia, and during a transitional period, a part of its territory formed a short-lived state (Carpatho-Ukraine); for a short time it returned to the Kingdom of Hungary; it was annexed to the Soviet Union after another transitional period (Transcarpathian Ukraine); In 1991, it was inherited by Ukraine, which became independent at the time (Table 1).

Table 1. The status of the region in the twentieth century and today

State affiliation	Period	Name of the region	International treaties that affect the region's affiliation
Kingdom of Hungary in Austro-Hungarian Monarchy	1867–1918	Ung, Bereg, Ugocsa, Máramaros counties	Austro-Hungarian Compromise on the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1867).
Czechoslovak Republic	1919–1938	Podkarpatska Rus	Treaty of Saint-Germain (10/09/1919), Treaty of Trianon (04/06/1920).
Czechoslovak Republic	1938–1939	Podkarpatska Rus	Autonomous region
Carpatho-Ukraine	14-16.03.1939		Independent State
Kingdom of Hungary	1939–1944	Subcarpathian Province	First Vienna Award (02/11/1938); Military actions (14-18/03/1939), second Vienna Award (30/08/1940).
Transcarpathian Ukraine	26.9.1944–22.1.1946		(Theoretically) Independent State
Ukrainian SSR in the Soviet Union	1946–1991	Zakarpattia Oblast	Treaty between The Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia (29/06/1945).
Ukraine	From 1991	Zakarpattia Oblast	Establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (07/12/1991) and Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine (24/08/1991).

Demography

Between 1880 and 1910, the number of Ukrainians/Ruthenians living in the territory of the contemporary Hungarian state increased from 342,354 to 464,270, while between 1910 and 2001 the number of Hungarians living in the present Transcarpathian region decreased from 184,287 (1910) to 151,516 in 2001 and 130,700 in 2017. The decrease in the number and proportion of Hungarians is significant and shows a correlation with the changes in states (Figures 1 and 2).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the first (and still only) census in the independent Ukraine was organized in 2001. The majority of the country's population was Ukrainian (77.8%). The largest national minority was Russian (17.3%). The proportion of other minority communities did not reach 1%. In 2001, 156,566 people declared themselves to be of Hungarian nationality (0.3%), while the number of Hungarian native speakers was 161,618 (Figure 3).

96.8% of Hungarians living in Ukraine and 98.2% of people with Hungarian as a native language lived in one region: Transcarpathia. In this region, following Ukrainians (80.5%), Hungarians were the largest community (12.1%). The number of Hungarian native speakers was 158,729, which was 12.7% in 2001. The number of Hungarian native speakers exceeded the number of Hungarians by 7,123.

Most Hungarians in Transcarpathia (62%) still live in settlements where Hungarians make up an absolute majority (Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 1. Changes in the percentage of Hungarians in today's Transcarpathia in the light of official census data (1880-2001)
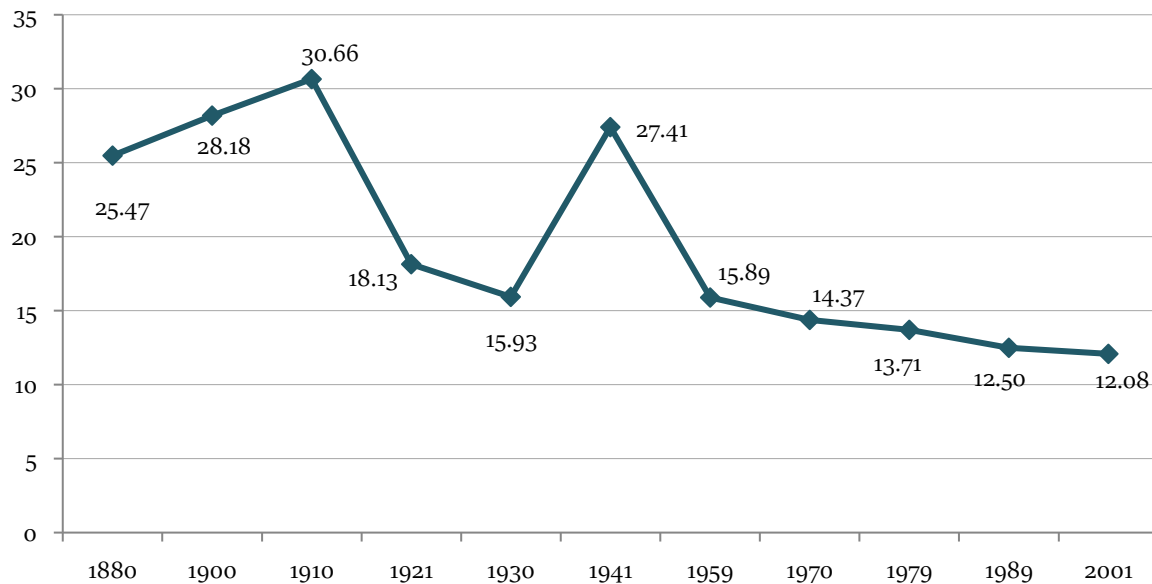
Figure 2. Population trends of Ukraine and Transcarpathia and the number of Hungarians in Transcarpathia between 1959 and 2001

Legend: Transcarpathia · Hungarians in Transcarpathia · Ukraine
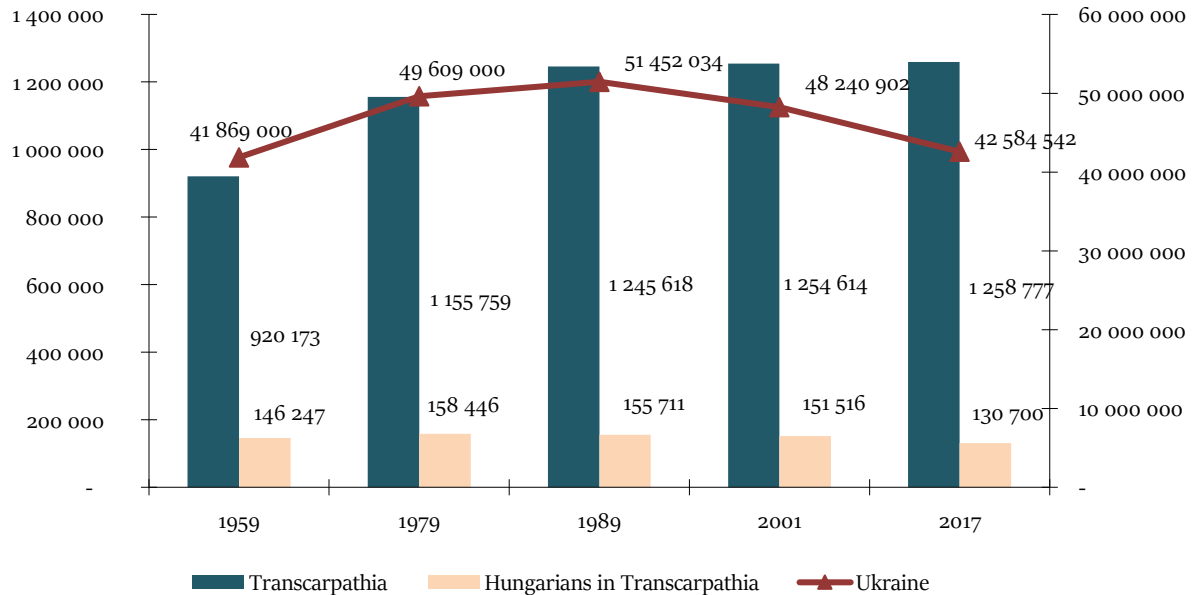
Figure 3. Minority language speakers in Ukraine based on 2001 census data

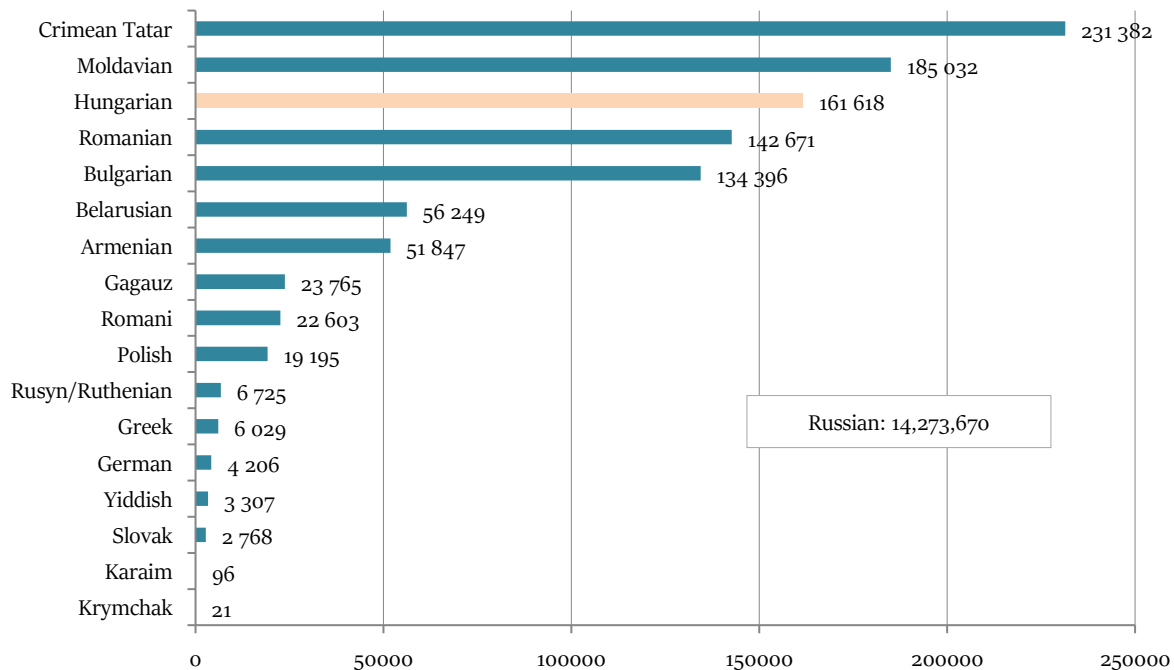| Language	Speakers
Crimean Tatar	231 382
Moldavian	185 032
Hungarian	161 618
Romanian	142 671
Bulgarian	134 396
Belarusian	56 249
Armenian	51 847
Gagauz	23 765
Romani	22 603
Polish	19 195
Rusyn/Ruthenian	6 725
Greek	6 029
German	4 206
Yiddish	3 307
Slovak	2 768
Karaim	96
Krymchak	21

Russian: 14,273,670

Figure 4. Distribution of Hungarians by ethnic composition of settlements in Transcarpathia based on the 2001 census data (%)

Legend:
- Higher than 75% (Hungarian dominance)
- Between 50% and 75% (Hungarian majority)
- Between 10% and 50% (Hungarian minority)
- the proportion of Hungarians is below 10%, their number is over 100 (diaspora)
- Hungarians are under 10%, less than 100 (people living in diaspora)

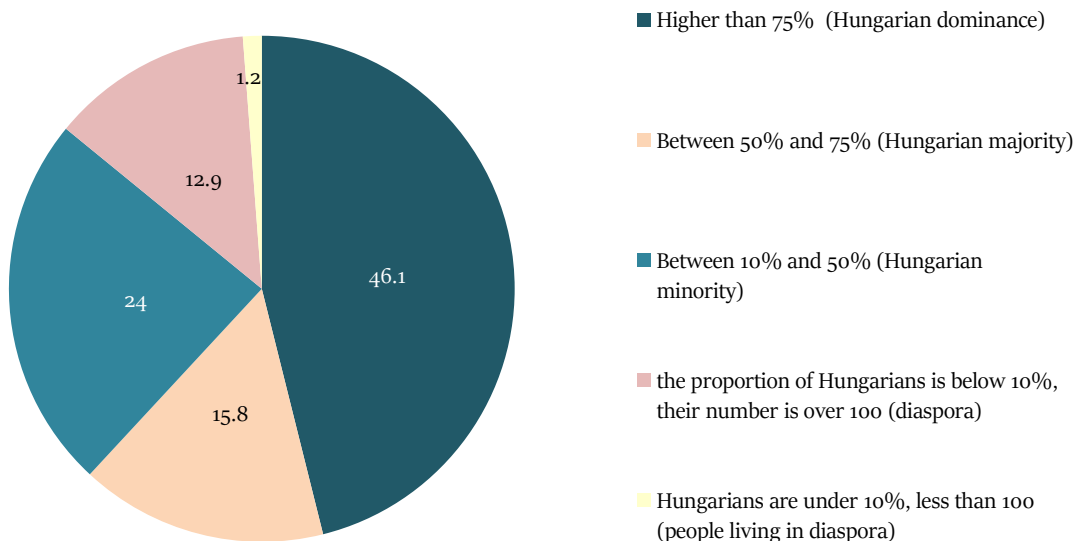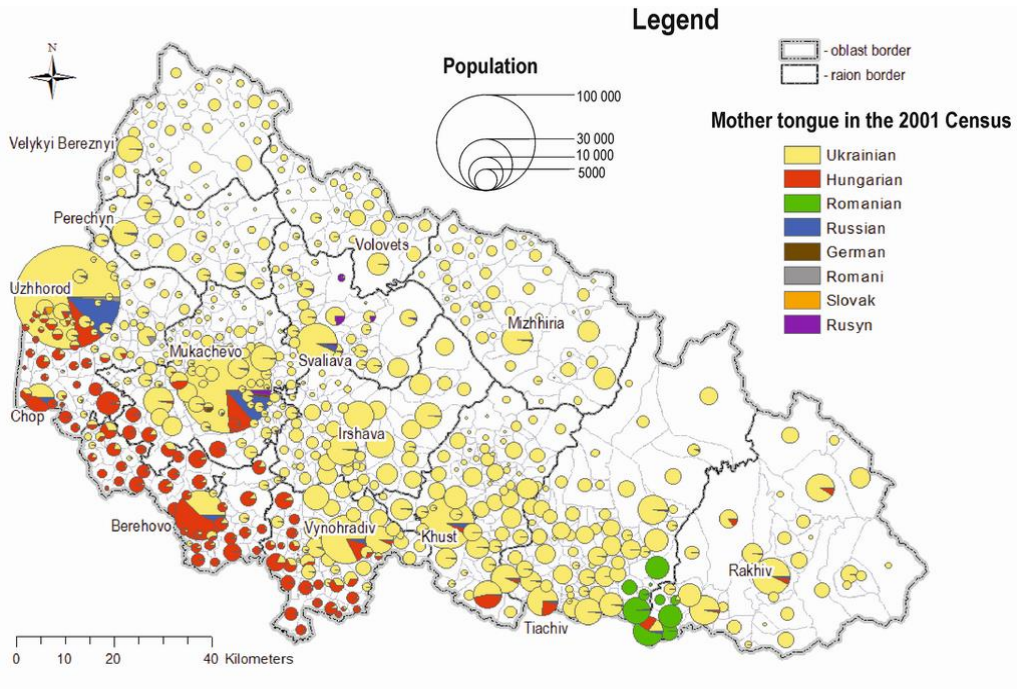Values: 46.1, 15.8, 24, 12.9, 1.2

Figure 5. Native-language composition of the population in Transcarpathia by settlement in 2001

Education

Hungarian-language medium education has a long tradition in today's Transcarpathia: schools with Hungarian as the language of instruction operated here even when the region belonged to Czechoslovakia or the Soviet Union. Independent Ukraine also made it possible for the Hungarian-language medium education system to function and even to develop (Figure 6). During the academic year 2019/2020, nearly 16,000 children studied in Hungarian in 97 schools (mostly with Hungarian as the language of instruction) in Transcarpathia.

However, not all Hungarians (are able to) learn in their mother tongue. The higher the level of the education, the more Hungarian children and younsters study in the official language of the state (Figure 7). Most of these learners chose to study in the state language at their own discretion; however, there are also some who are forced (because there is no Hungarian kindergarten or school available in their settlement or near their place of residence).

As the language of higher education in the Soviet Union was Russian, Slavic speakers were in a better position. It is clear from the data of the 2001 census that the proportion of Russian-speaking graduates in Ukraine was the highest, and the lowest among non-Slavic (Moldavian, Hungarian, Romanian) speakers (Figure 8).

Figure 6. The number of pupils in Hungarian schools and the number of children enrolled in the first grade of Hungarian schools in Transcarpathia between 1987 and 2020

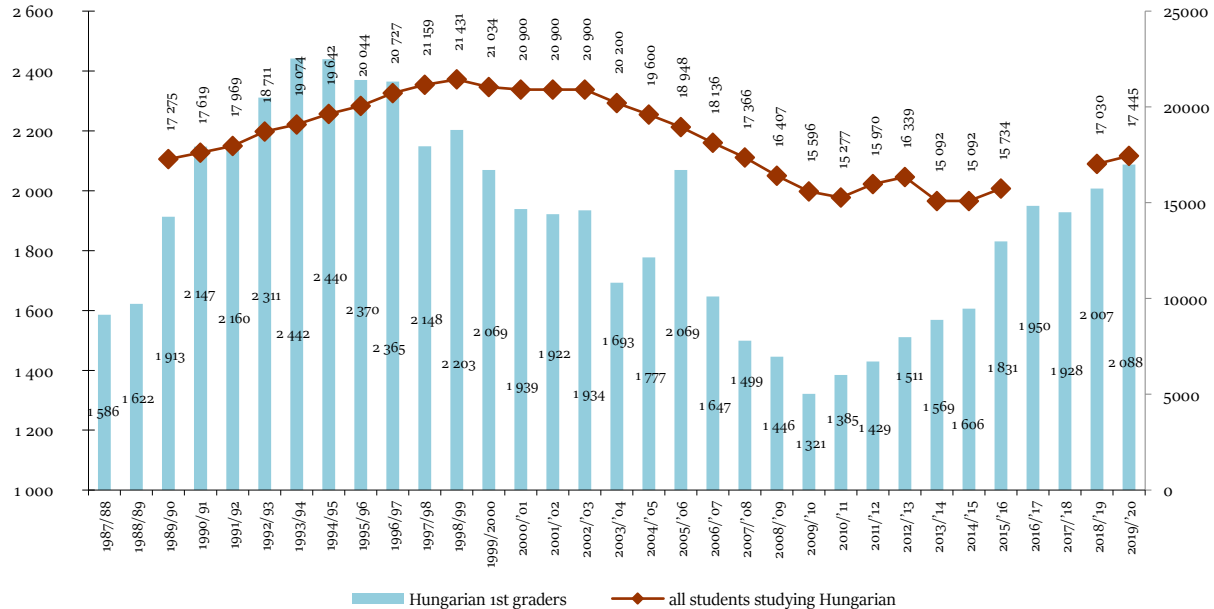Hungarian 1st graders — all students studying Hungarian

Figure 7. The proportion of Hungarian and majority language learners at each level of education based on Tandem 2016 research data (N=362)
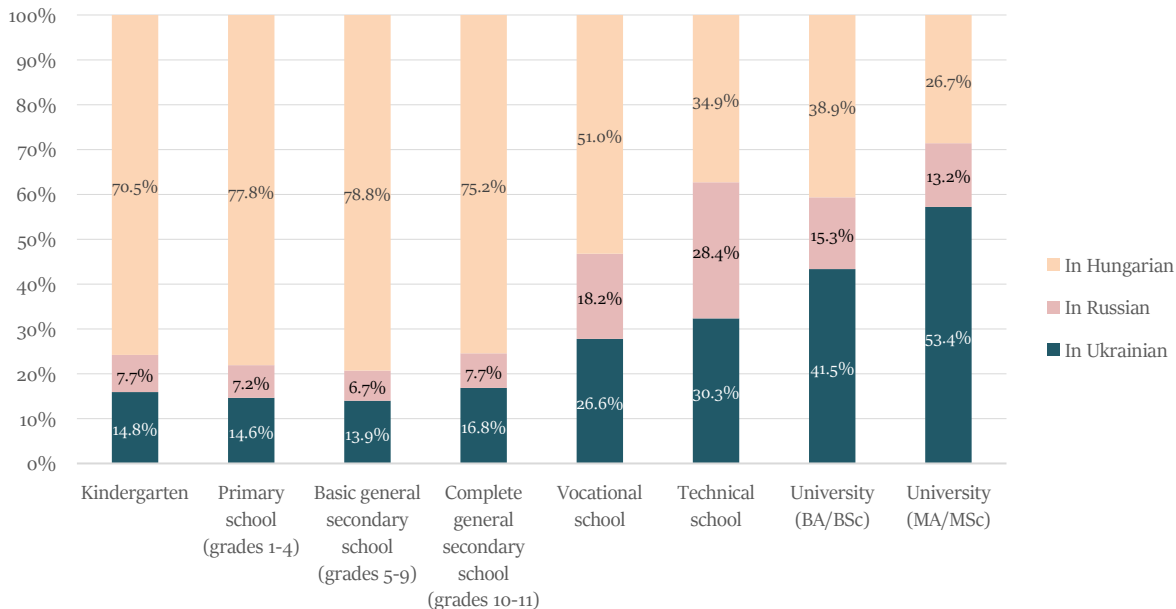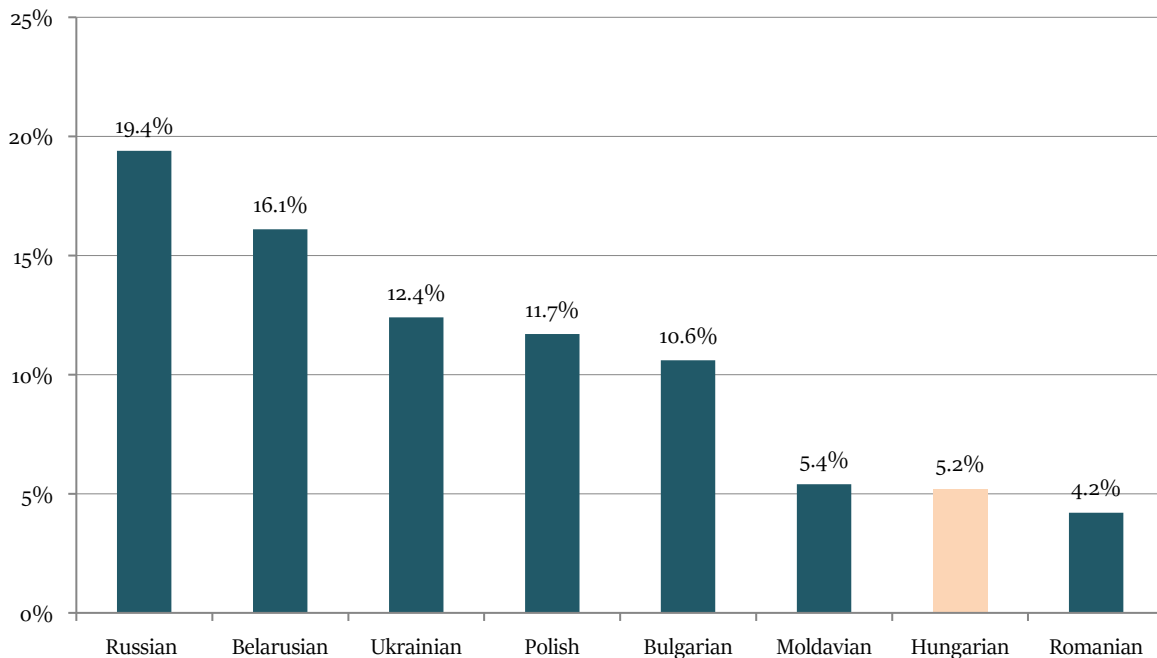
Figure 8. The ratio of higher education in Ukraine by nationality based on 2001 census data

Educational discrimination is indicated by a study of a representative sample of Ukrainians and Hungarians living in the region, showing that Ukrainians in Transcarpathia have better education rates than Hungarians (Figure 9).

After the establishment of Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College in 1996, the institution issued its first graduates in 2001. The Hungarian-language college graduates – supplemented by the students of the Hungarian-Ukrainian Institute of Education and Science of the National University of Ungvár – have significantly improved the education indicators of the Transcarpathian Hungarian population: the proportion of the Hungarians had grown, especially amongst younger generations (Figure 10).

With the new Law on Education adopted in 2017 and its related legislation, Ukraine wants to curb the role of the mother tongues at all levels of education and direct citizens towards studying in the state language. As a result of the new legislation, from 2023 onwards in schools with Hungarian and Romanian language of instruction, and from 5th September 2020 in Russian-language medium institutions, some subjects will no longer be taught in mother tongues but will have to be partially changed for state language education (Table 2). In the cells of Table 2, 100% means that all subject but the foreign language classes, Ukrainian language and Ukrainian literature are taught in that language.

The building of the Ferenc Rakoczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education
(Photo by: László Fülöp)

Figure 9. The education of Hungarians and Ukrainians in Transcarpathia based on Tandem 2016

	Hungarian	Ukrainian
Basic general secondary school	6%	4%
Vocational school	4%	13%
Complete general secondary school	68%	32%
Technical school	9%	29%
University	13%	22%

Legend:
- Basic general secondary school
- Vocational school
- Complete general secondary school
- Technical school
- University
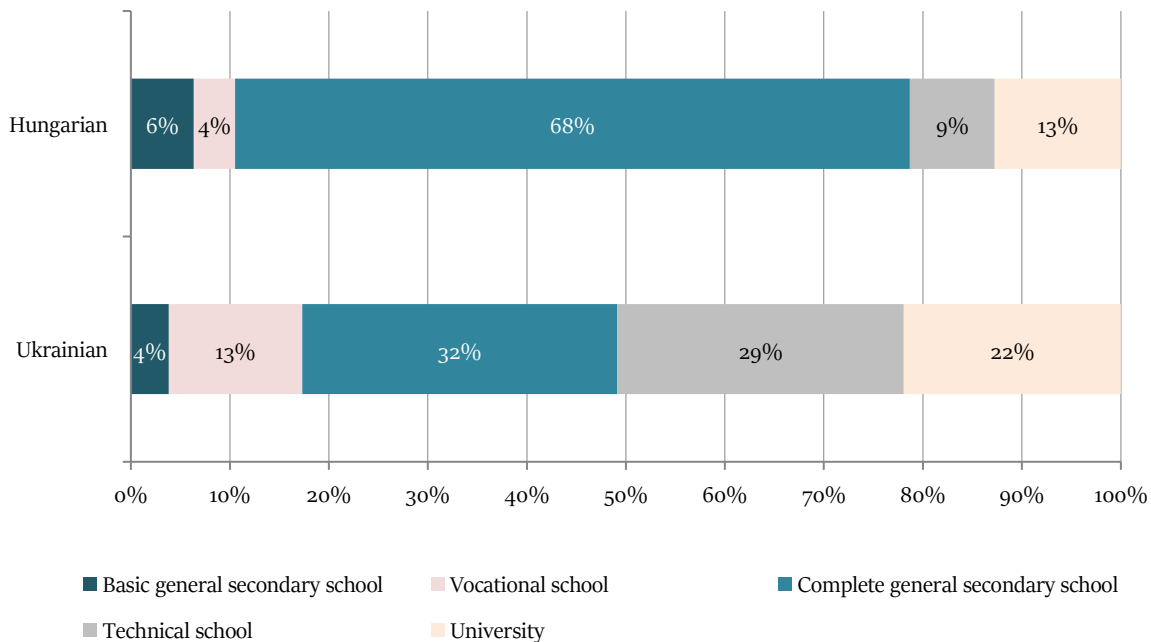
Figure 10. The highest level of education among Transcarpathian Hungarians by age group, according to Summa 2017

Age group	less than general	general	secondary	higher
80+	9%	48%	38%	5%
70-79	3%	36%	54%	7%
60-69	1%	19%	71%	10%
50-59		8%	78%	13%
40-49		7%	79%	14%
30-39		8%	68%	24%
18-29		4%	70%	25%

Table 2. Maximum percentage of the use of the mother tongue at different levels of public education, pursuant to Article 7 of th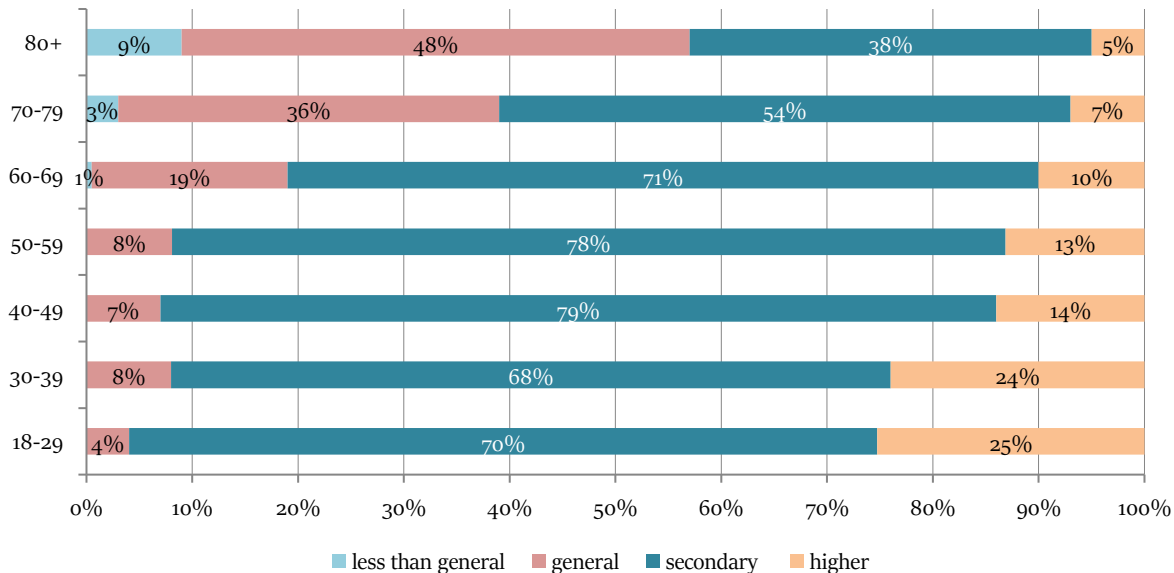e Law on Education of 2017, Article 5 of the law on general secondary education, and Article 21 of the State Language Law

	Grades 1–4	5th grade	9th grade	Grades 10–12	Who are they?
persons belonging to the majority*	100	100	100	100	Ukrainians
indigenous people**	100	100	100	100	Crimean Tatars
minorities whose languages are official in the EU**	100	80	60	40	Hungarians, Romanians
minorities whose languages are not official in the EU**	100	20	20	20	Russians

* At least one foreign language is taught as a subject from Grade 1

** At least one foreign language + Ukrainian language and literature are taught as a subject. The mother tongue may only appear in education "alongside the state language".

Churches

The Ukrainian census does not contain data on religious, denominational composition of the population. However, from sociological surveys, we know that the majority of the Ukrainian population is Eastern Christian, that is, Orthodox (Table 3), but the absolute majority of Hungarians are supporters of Western Christian churches. The majority of Hungarians in Transcarpathia are Reformed, but a significant proportion are Roman or Greek Catholic (Figure 11).
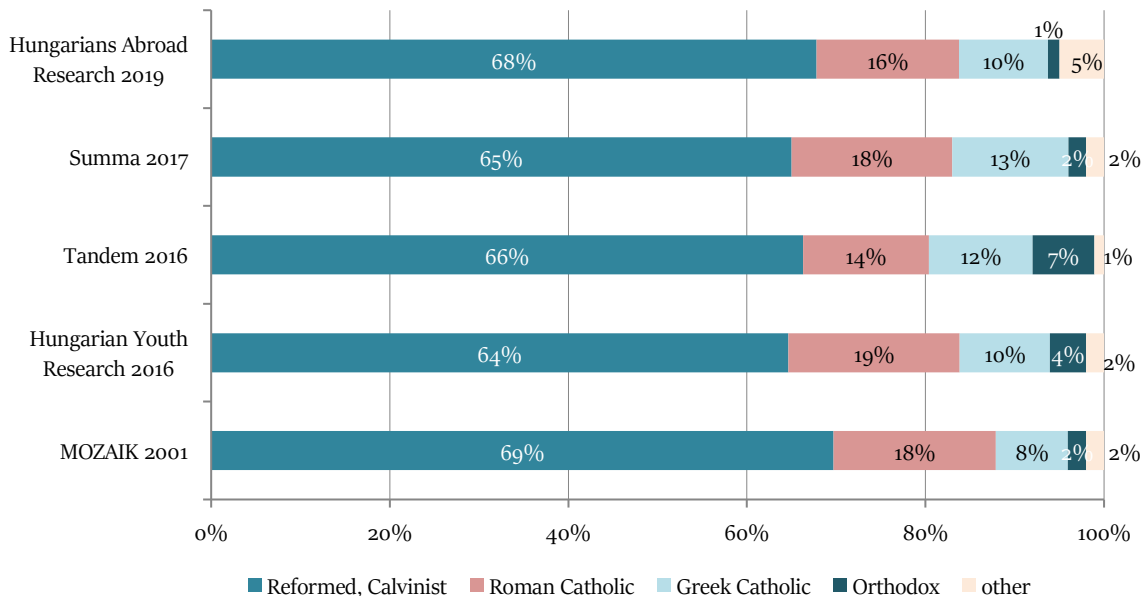

Berehove/Beregszász
(Photo by: Szabolcs Bunda)

Table 3. Religious distribution of the population of Ukraine according to sociological survey data (2019)

Church denomination	%
Orthodox	79%
Roman Catholic	1%
Greek Catholic	9%
Protestant	1%
other	3%
atheist	4%
no answer	3%
total	*100%*

Figure 11. The denominational composition of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community based on data from various sociological researches

Legend:
- Reformed, Calvinist
- Roman Catholic
- Greek Catholic
- Orthodox
- other

Data from chart:

Research	Reformed, Calvinist	Roman Catholic	Greek Catholic	Orthodox	other
Hungarians Abroad Research 2019	68%	16%	10%	1%	5%
Summa 2017	65%	18%	13%	2%	2%
Tandem 2016	66%	14%	12%	7%	1%
Hungarian Youth Research 2016	64%	19%	10%	4%	2%
MOZAIK 2001	69%	18%	8%	2%	2%

Language rights

The legal status of minority languages is characterized by 6 grades and levels (Table 4):

- (5) The language of the minority is an official or state language *throughout the country*.
- (4) The *official language* of a smaller or larger *regional unit* (country, province, autonomous region, county, district).
- (3) The use of a language is *allowed in public communication*, it can be used in *education, cultural life, the press*, and in some cases it can be used in *official situations*, although the language has no official status.
- (2) The use of a language is *tolerated in private life*, possibly in *church life* and in *private schools*, but not (or to a limited extent) in state-controlled settings.
- The use of a language is *prohibited* by laws and regulations.
- The existence and independence of the language *is not recognized*.

Table 4. The legal status of the languages used today in Transcarpathia (1868-2020) on a 6-point scale

Languages → States ↓	Rusyn/ Ruthenian	Ukrainian	Hungarian	Russian	Slovak	Romanian	Romani	Yiddish
Kingdom of Hungary in Austro-Hungarian Monarchy	3	3	5	3	3	3	0	0
(First) Czechoslovak Republic	4	4	3	3	5	3	2	3
Czechoslovak Republic	2	4	3	3	5	3	2	3
Carpatho-Ukraine	2	5	2	3	2	2	2	2
Kingdom of Hungary	4	1	5	3	2	2	2	2
Ukrainian Transcarpathia	0	5	2	5	2	2	2	2
Soviet Union	0	4	3	5	3	2	2	2
Ukraine (1991–2012)	0	5	3	3	3	3	2	2
Ukraine (2012–2018)	2	5	4	3	3	3	2	2
Ukraine (2019-)	**0**	**5**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**

It is clear from the summary table that:

- The legal status of the languages used in today's Transcarpathia has changed many times over the last hundred years. None of the languages' status used in the region has been constant over the last hundred years.
- In all cases, the changes in states reordered the hierarchy between languages.
- The official language has changed 6 times in the last hundred years, which has always brought a change, a compulsion for the people living in the region.
- Taking a closer look at the status of the Hungarian language and its changes, we can see that its language policy is not constant in the independent Ukraine.
- The 2012 Language Law brought a positive change, but the State Language Act adopted in 2019 reduced the status of the Hungarian language in Transcarpathia compared to 1991.
- Over the last century, several state entities have allowed minority languages to be used as official languages at regional and/or local level.
- The 2019 Ukrainian State Language Act abolished the regional official language status of the Hungarian language, and our language cannot be used as an official language in the work of county, district or local governments even in nearly 100% of Hungarian-populated settlements (Table 5).

Table 5. Official languages at national, regional and local level in what is now Transcarpathia (1868-2020)

	at the national (imperial) level	regional level	at the local (municipal) level
Kingdom of Hungary in Austro-Hungarian Monarchy	German	Hungarian	the language of the local majority
(First) Czechoslovak Republic	Czechoslovak	Czechoslovak, Rusyn/Ruthenian	besides Czechoslovak, the language whose speakers reached 20%
Czechoslovak Republic	Czechoslovak	Czechoslovak, Rusyn/Ruthenian	the language whose speakers reached 20%
Carpatho-Ukraine	Ukrainian	Ukrainian	Ukrainian
Kingdom of Hungary	Hungarian	Hungarian, Hungarian-Russian (Rusyn/Ruthenian)	Hungarian, Hungarian-Russian (Rusyn/Ruthenian)
Ukrainian Transcarpathia	Russian, Ukrainian	Russian, Ukrainian	Russian, Ukrainian
Soviet Union	Russian, Ukrainian	Ukrainian	Russian, Ukrainian
Ukraine (1991–2012)	Ukrainian	Ukrainian	besides Ukrainian, the language of a national minority which exceeds 50%
Ukraine (2012–2018)	Ukrainian	Ukrainian, Hungarian	in addition to Ukrainian, the language whose native speakers reach a 10% ratio
Ukraine (2019-)	Ukrainian	Ukrainian	Ukrainian

The status of minority languages, including Hungarian, may change or decrease even today, in the 21st century, because current international law, unfortunately, does not codify appropriate protection mechanisms for minority language speakers. For example, according to the 2017 monitoring by the Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe, Ukraine is not even fully fulfilling its obligations when ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

The Committee of Experts used a 3-point scale to assess its obligations:

(4) Fulfilled: Policies, legislation and practice are in conformity with the Charter.

(3) Partly fulfilled: Policies and legislation are wholly or partly in conformity with the Charter, but the undertaking is only partly implemented in practice.

(2) Formally fulfilled: Policies and legislation are in conformity with the Charter, but there is no implementation in practice.

(1) Not fulfilled: No action in policies, legislation and practice has been taken to implement the undertaking or the Committee of Experts has not received any information on the implementation over several monitoring cycles.

( ) No conclusion: The Committee of Experts is not in a position to conclude on the fulfilment of the undertaking as no or insufficient information has been provided by the authorities.

For example, if we look at how the Committee of Experts assessed Kyiv's compliance with its obligations in 2017, e. g. in Article 10 of the Language Charter, it appears that none of the points was fully met (Table 6).

Table 6. How Kyiv has fulfilled its commitments to promote the use of regional or minority languages in public administration, as assessed by the Council of Europe Committee of Experts *(4: fulfilled; 3: partly fulfilled; 2: formally fulfilled; 1: not fulfilled)*

Article 10 – Administrative authorities and public services 2. In respect of the local and regional authorities on whose territory the number of residents who are users of regional or minority languages is such as to justify the measures specified below, the Parties undertake to allow and/or encourage:	
a) the use of regional or minority languages within the framework of the regional or local authority;	*3*
b) the possibility for users of regional or minority languages to submit oral or written applications in these languages;	*–*
c) the publication by regional authorities of their official documents also in the relevant regional or minority languages	*1*
d)the publication by local authorities of their official documents also in the relevant regional or minority languages;	*1*
e) the use by regional authorities of regional or minority languages in debates in their assemblies, without excluding, however, the use of the official language(s) of the State;	*1*
f) the use by local authorities of regional or minority languages in debates in their assemblies, without excluding, however, the use of the official language(s) of the State;	*3*
g) the use or adoption, if necessary in conjunction with the name in the official language(s), of traditional and correct forms of place-names in regional or minority languages.	*3*

For other articles of the Charter, Ukraine has fulfilled its obligations at a slightly higher proportion, but its level of performance is, on average, slightly below that of the partially fulfilled, and not even higher for the application of any Article of the Language Charter (Figure 12).

Ukrainian language policy gone astray- analytical overview of Ukrainian language policy in Hungarian, Ukrainian and English

Figure 12. How Kyiv has fulfilled its obligations regarding the promotion of regional or minority languages through ratification of the Language Charter, as assessed by the EC Committee of Experts in 2017 *(4: fulfilled; 3: partly fulfilled; 2: formally fulfilled; 1: not fulfilled)*
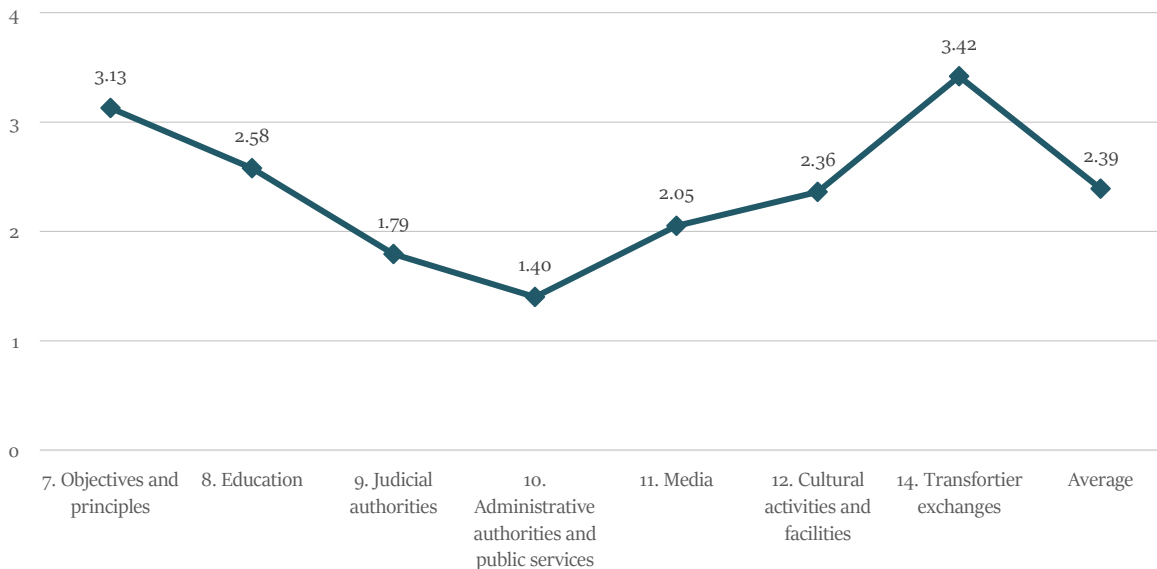
Language use, identity

At the turn of the 19-20th century, the majority of Hungarians in Hungary, Ung, Bereg, Ugocsa and Máramaros were monolingual, but there is a significant proportion of Hungarians living in today's Transcarpathia who speak other languages besides their mother tongue. Although it is true that between the years 1880 and 1910, the proportion of multilingual Hungarians in each of the four mentioned Northeastern counties slightly decreased, in 1910 almost half of the Hungarian-speaking population were (at least) bilingual in Máramaros, nearly two-fifths in Ung, one-fifth in Ugocsa and one-sixth in Bereg (Table 6).
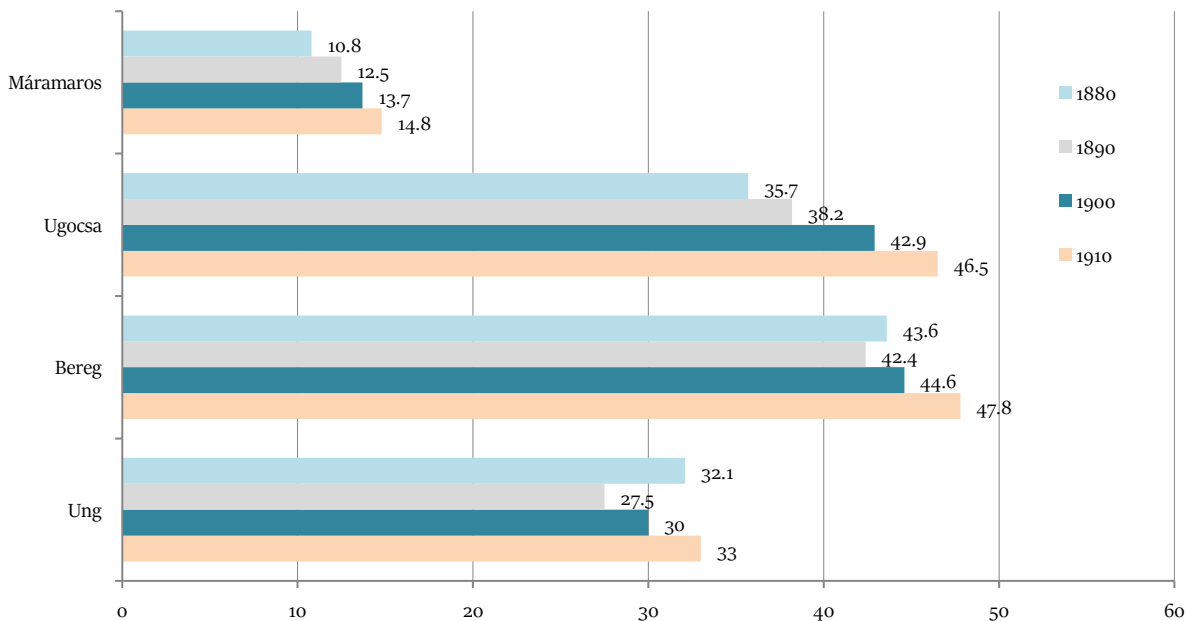

Place name plate of Hecha/Mezőgecse

Table 6. The percentage of Hungarian-speaking population who also speak other languages in Hungary and in the four surveyed counties (1880-1910)

	1880	1890	1900	1910
Hungary	17.5	18.6	20.5	18.6
Ung	38.3	37.5	33.9	37.4
Bereg	23.3	18.2	16.3	16.3
Ugocsa	26.9	27.7	20.8	22.0
Máramaros	51.6	51.5	49.2	45.9

Figure 13. A change in the proportion of speakers of Hungarian among mother tongue speakers of other languages between 1880 and 1910, based on census data (in percentages)

Máramaros
- 10.8
- 12.5
- 13.7
- 14.8

Ugocsa
- 35.7
- 38.2
- 42.9
- 46.5

Bereg
- 43.6
- 42.4
- 44.6
- 47.8

Ung
- 32.1
- 27.5
- 30
- 33

Legend: 1880, 1890, 1900, 1910

Meanwhile, between 1890 and 1910, the proportion of Hungarian speakers among non-Hungarians increased significantly in the Northeastern region of Hungary (Figure 13).

A comparison of Table 6 and Figure 13 (the proportion of native speakers of Hungarian who were bilingual compared to the proportion of non-native speakers of the state language) reveals that the proportion of bilingual Hungarians is higher than Hungarian speakers of different nationalities. Based on four censuses conducted at the turn of the 20th century, the proportion of those Ruthenians who spoke the official language increased from 5.5% in 1880 to 14.0% in 1910, but in those four examined counties, the knowledge of the Hungarian language did not spread rapidly among the Slavic population. In 1910, the proportion of Ruthenians who spoke Hungarian reached 25% only in Bereg among the four counties. In fact, among native speakers of Hungarian, the proportion of those familiar with Ruthenian was almost as high as the other way round (Table 7). In Máramaros, for example, the 1910 census recorded that almost a quarter of Hungarian native speakers in the county spoke Ruthenian, while only 8 percent of the Ruthenian population knew Hungarian. In this county, all four censuses of the time stated that the Slavic languages were more widely known among Hungarians than the state language among the minorities.

Table 7. The percentage of Rusyns and Hungarians that mutually speak each other's language

	1880		1890		1900		1910	
	Rusyns in Hungarian	Hungarians in Rusyn	Rusyns in Hungarian	Hungarians in Rusyn	Rusyns in Hungarian	Hungarians in Rusyn	Rusyns in Hungarian	Hungarians in Rusyn
Ung	2.9	2.7	4.1	3.7	8.1	5.0	16.0	8.9
Bereg	5.3	7.9	10.7	7.6	15.2	7.9	25.6	14.1
Ugocsa	19.6	12.8	17.4	11.5	18.7	15.4	22.0	15.6
Máramaros	3.4	17.9	5.6	22.2	4.8	18.6	8.0	24.4
Kingdom of Hungary	5.5	0.3	7.3	0.3	8.4	0.3	14.0	0.5

From the above it can be seen that at the turn of the 20th century, the hierarchical relationships between languages in the region away from the centers were influenced more by the regional and local majority-minority relationship and the usefulness of languages, than by state language and education policy. Furthermore, if we look at the data on the knowledge of languages from the turn of the 20-21. century, a similar picture emerges.

According to the 2001 census (Tables 8 and 9), in Transcarpathia, most people spoke Hungarian (36 thousand) and Russian (31 thousand) as their second language in addition to their mother tongue. The majority of those who spoke Hungarian was among Ukrainians, while Russian was spoken mostly by Ukrainians and Hungarians. Almost two thirds (63%) of the Transcarpathians spoke only their mother tongue (Figure 14).

Linguistic legal relationships have a decisive influence on which languages are mandatory, permitted or even prohibited in certain situations. The 2016 survey of Transcarpathian Ukrainians and Hungarians with a total of 1,200 contributors reveals that Ukrainian native speakers can use the Ukrainian language in a statistically significant number of situations and in greater proportions and are generally not forced to use another language. At the same time, it can be seen that the proportion of those who use only Hungarian is outstanding in situations that can be classified as private. Hungarians use only the Hungarian language when communicating with their neighbors, friends, schoolmates and the social network more often than the informants in the Ukrainian sample. Thus, in most situations Hungarians are forced to use another language beside or instead of their mother tongue (Figure 15).

Table 8. Language skills of the population of Transcarpathia based on the 1989 and 2001 censuses

Languages	Mother tongue		Second language		In total		Do not speak	
	1989	*2001*	*1989*	*2001*	*1989*	*2001*	*1989*	*2001*
Ukrainian	972,827	1,016,268	48,106	19,699	1,020,933	1,035,967	224,685	218,647
Hungarian	166,700	158,729	12,500	38,694	179,200	197,423	1,066,418	1,057,191
Russian	62,150	36,412	670,046	32,877	732,196	69,289	513,422	1,185,325

Table 9. Language skills of the population of Transcarpathia, based on the 1989 and 2001 censuses (percentage of the total population)

Languages	Mother tongue		Second language		In total		Do not speak	
	1989	*2001*	*1989*	*2001*	*1989*	*2001*	*1989*	*2001*
Ukrainian	78.10	81.00	3.86	1.57	81.96	82.57	18.04	17.43
Hungarian	13.38	12.65	1.00	3.08	14.39	15.74	85.61	84.26
Russian	4.99	2.90	53.79	2.62	58.78	5.52	41.22	94.48

Figure 14. The percentage of people who only speak their mother tongue in Transcarpathia by nationality based on the 2001 census
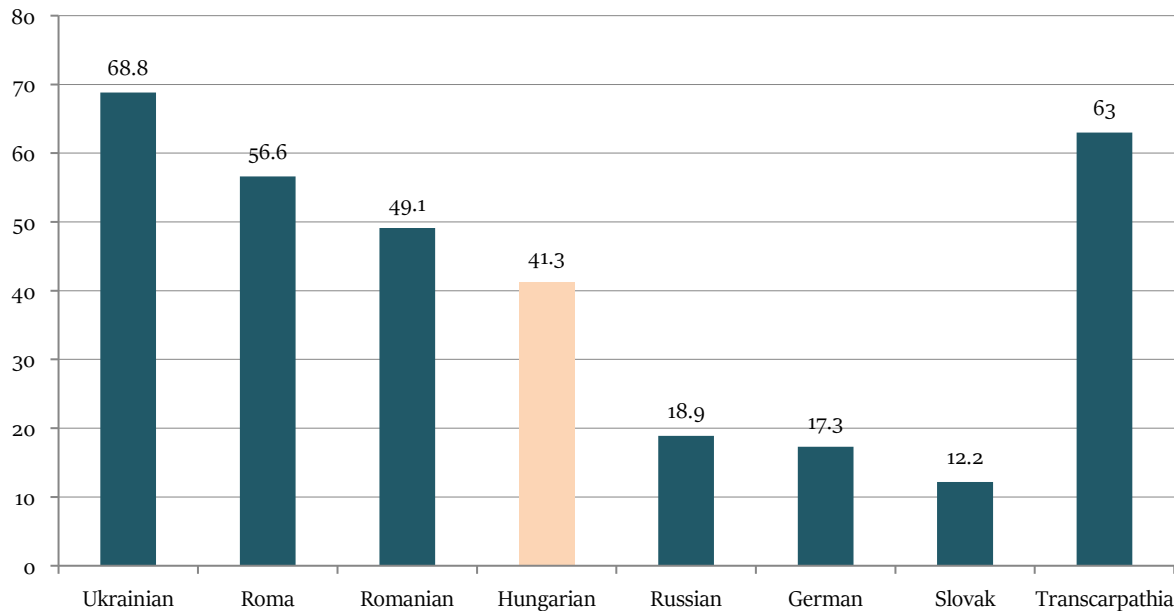
Figure 15. Exclusive appearance of the mother tongue in different language usage scenes in the Ukrainian and Hungarian subsamples according to Tandem 2016 (in percentages)

Hungarian patern only Hungarian   Ukrainian pattern only Ukrainian
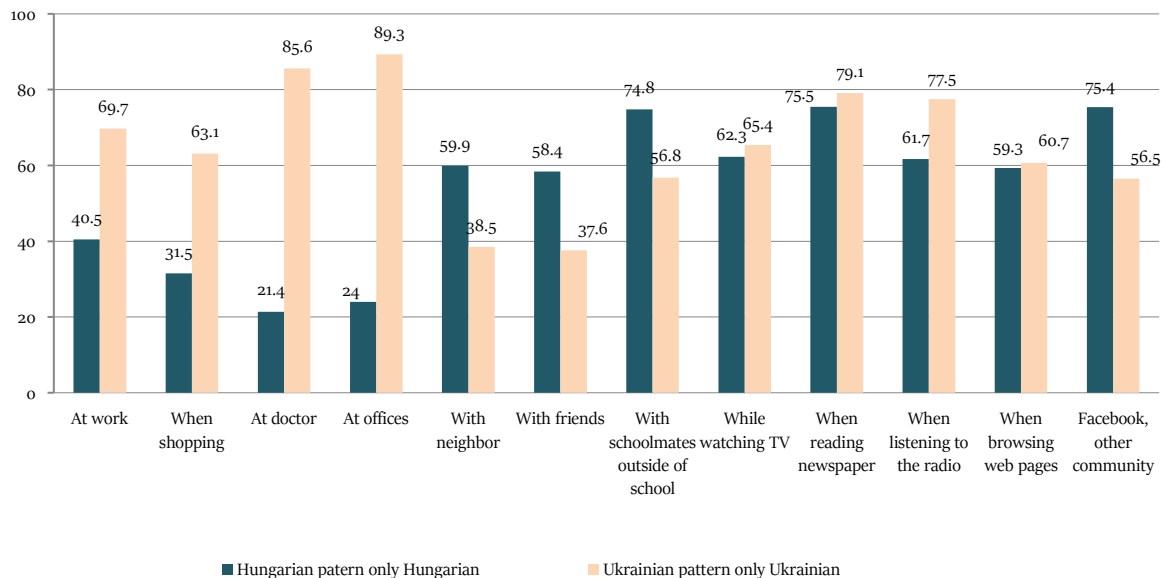
Economy

The hierarchical relationship between the majority and the minority, as well as the legacy of the Soviet era politics are reflected in the fact that Russian and Ukrainian nationalities are overrepresented in senior positions, while the proportion of Hungarians among manual workers is higher (Figure 16).

Tandem 2016 data from a representative sample of Ukrainians and Hungarians in Transcarpathia in 2016 suggest improving trends, although traces of inequality are still to be found: Hungarians have a higher proportion of subordinate employees and inactive people in the labor market, than among the Ukrainians (Figure 17).

Fruit and vegetable art exhibition at the Bereg Fest event

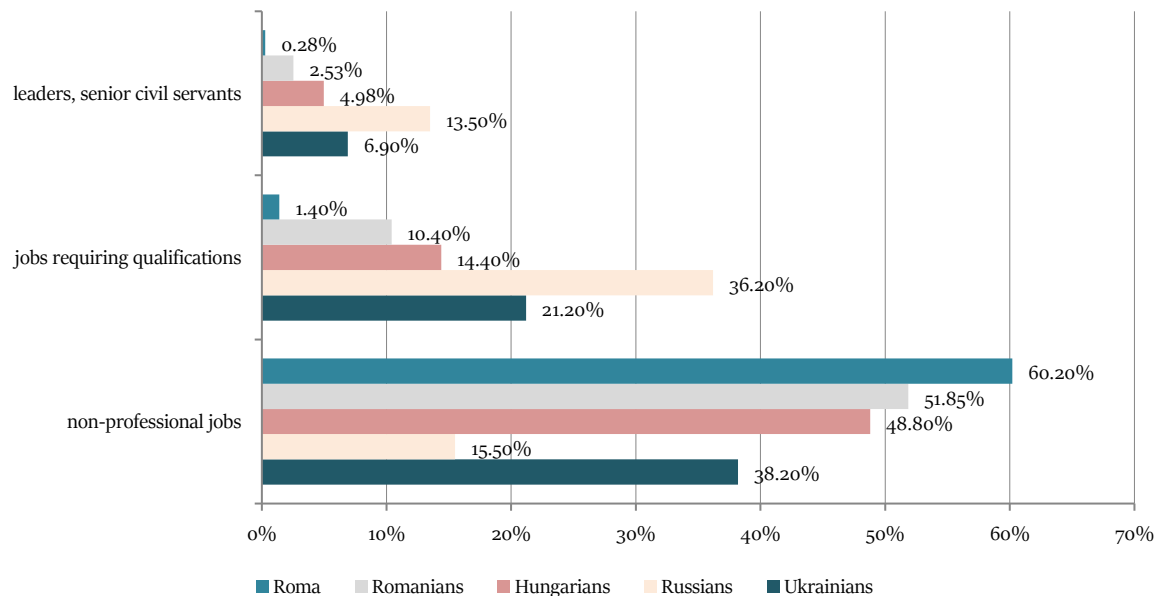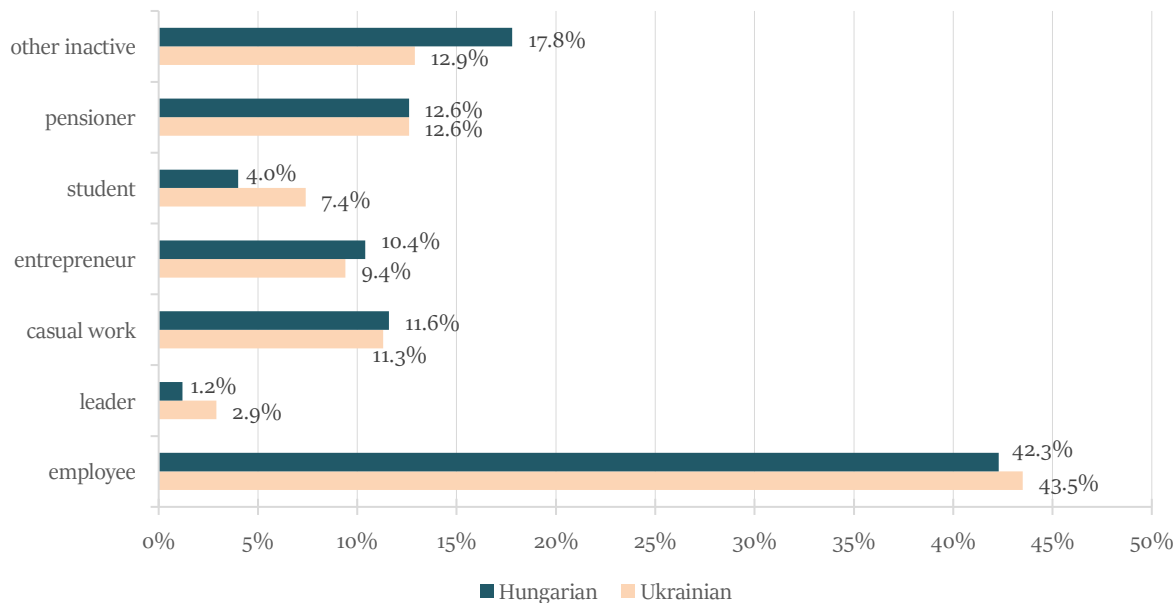**Figure 16.** Nationalities by occupation in Transcarpathia according to the 2001 census

Figure 17. The social activity of Ukrainian and Hungarian adults in Transcarpathia (based on Tandem 2016)

Their prestige and belief in their economic usefulness are essential to the future of languages: the language that is considered worthless and useless will not be passed on to the next generation. In 2016, a sample of Transcarpathian Ukrainians and Hungarians was asked on the importance of Ukrainian, Hungarian, Russian, English and German. The importance of each language was rated on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important). Both samples considered their own language very important. As the second most important language, both the Ukrainian and the Hungarian sample named the global language, English. The third highest score was given to the language of the other side in both samples: Ukrainians value the role of the Hungarian language relatively and Hungarians the role of the Ukrainian language in the future of their child. Both models consider German to be slightly more important and useful for future generations than Russian (Figure 18).

Inscriptions in Ukrainian, Hungarian and English at a fast food stall

Figure 18. Assessing the importance of languages for their children's future (1 = not important, 5 = very important)
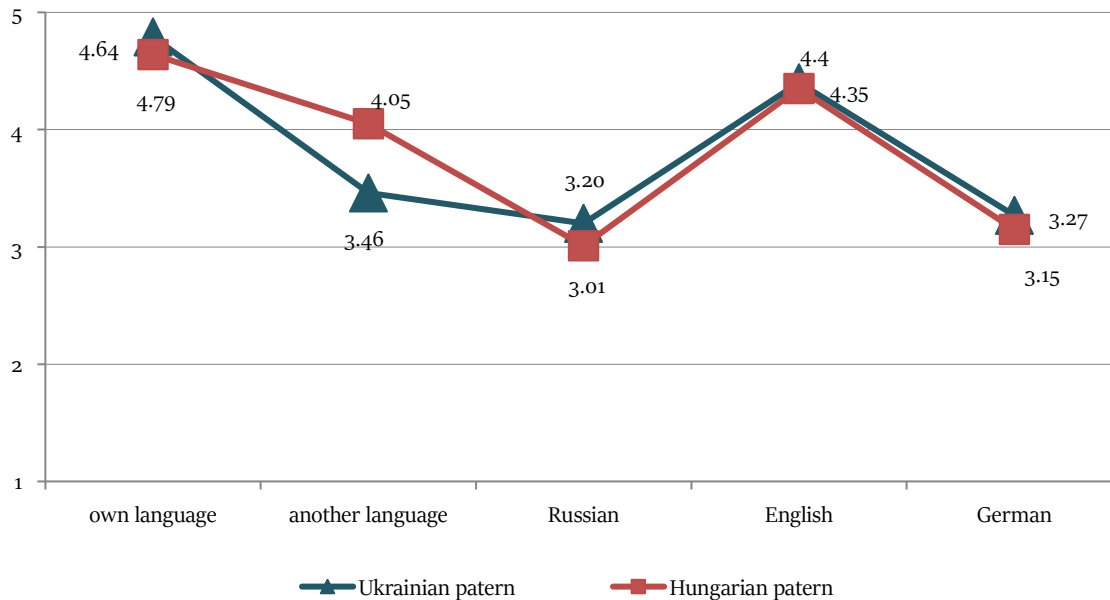
Representation of interests

In the last days of the Soviet Union, the Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association (KMKSZ), the largest organization of Hungarians in Transcarpathia, was formed, and a few years later the Ukrainian Democratic Association of Ukraine (UMDSZ) was formed. Along with other professional organizations (e.g. Transcarpathian Hungarian Pedagogical Association, Transcarpathian Association of Hungarian Intellectuals, Transcarpathian Hungarian Academic Council, etc.), the Hungarian national community is undoubtedly the most organized minority in Ukraine. These have made a significant contribution to the democratization of Ukraine, the route of Euro-Atlantic integration, are active supporters of the integration efforts of the Hungarians, and are indispensable contributors to maintaining political stability and inter-ethnic peace in the country and in Transcarpathia.

Transcarpathian Hungarians, despite making up only 0.3% of the population in Ukraine, were represented in five of the nine parliamentary cycles of Ukraine that became independent in 1991 with one representative in the 450-person parliament in Kyiv (Table 10). Unfortunately, due to the transformation of the election conditions, there is no Hungarian representative in Kyiv in the parliament elected in summer 2019.

Hungarian representatives are present in the representative bodies of the Transcarpathian regional (county, district) and local governments (Table 11 and Figure 18).

Table 10. Representatives of the Hungarians of Transcarpathia in the independent Supreme Council of Ukraine

	Időszak	Képviselő
Cycle I	April 1990 – May 1994	–
Cycle II	May 1994 – May 1998	Mihály Tóth
Cycle III	May 1998 – May 2002	Miklós Kovács
Cycle IV	May 2002 – May 2006	István Gajdos
Cycle V	May 2006 – November 2007	–
Cycle VI	November 2007 – December 2012	–
Cycle VII	December 2012 – November 2014	István Gajdos
Cycle VIII	November 2014 – August 2019	László Brenzovics
Cycle IX	August 2019 –	–

**Table 11.** Hungarian representatives on the representative body of the Transcarpathian County Council

	Cycle mandate	Total number of representatives	Number of Hungarian representatives, respective number of representatives of the Hungarian fraction
Cycle I	April 1992 – May 1994	60	11
Cycle II	July 1994 – April 1998	60	9
Cycle III	April 1998 – April 2002	75	4
Cycle IV	April 2002 – April 2006	85	4 (KMKSZ) and 3 (UMDSZ)
Cycle V	April 2006 – November 2010	70	5 (KMKSZ) and 4 (UMDSZ)
Cycle VI	November 2010 – December 2015	108	3 (KMKSZ) and 4 (UMDSZ)
Cycle VII	December 2015 –	64	8 (KMKSZ and UMDSZ joint fraction)

Transcarpathian Hungarian parties were represented in all the administrative units of the region (subordinate towns of Uzhhorod, Mukachevo, Berehove and Chop counties, 'raion' councils of Berehove, Vynohradiv, Mukachevo and Uzhhorod), where a significant number of Hungarians live. In the town of Berehove and in the Berehove raion (district), the Hungarian political representation deputizes the most representatives in the municipalities (Figure 19).

The poster announcing the 2020 municipal elections in Berehove/Beregszász

Figure 19. Representatives of the two Transcarpathian Hungarian parties in Hungarian-inhabited administrative units in Transcarpathia in the 2015-2020 election cycle
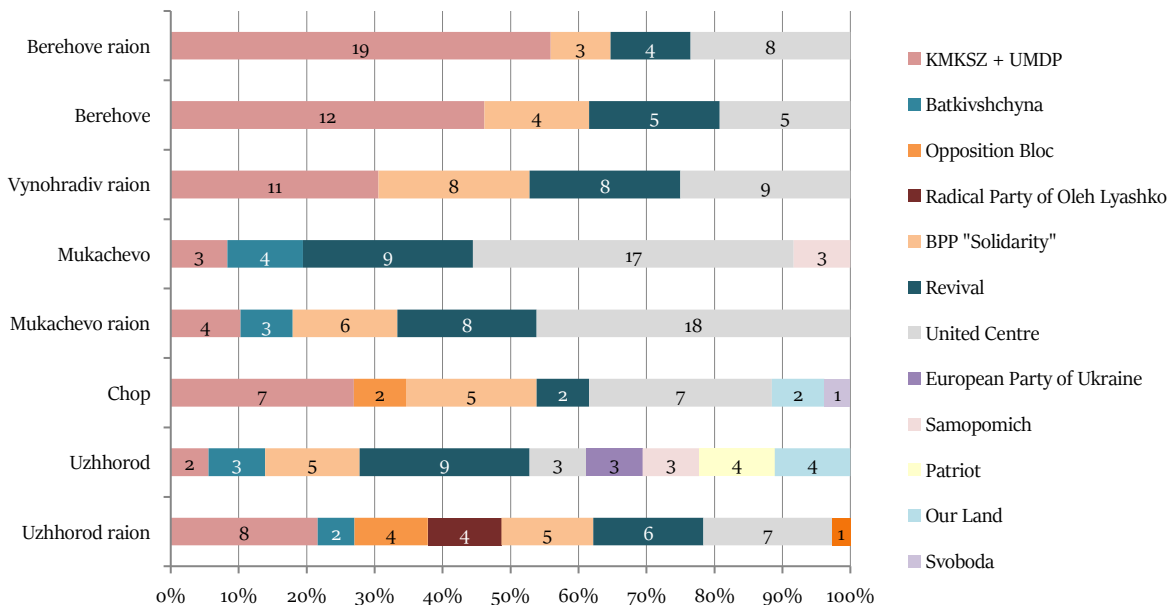
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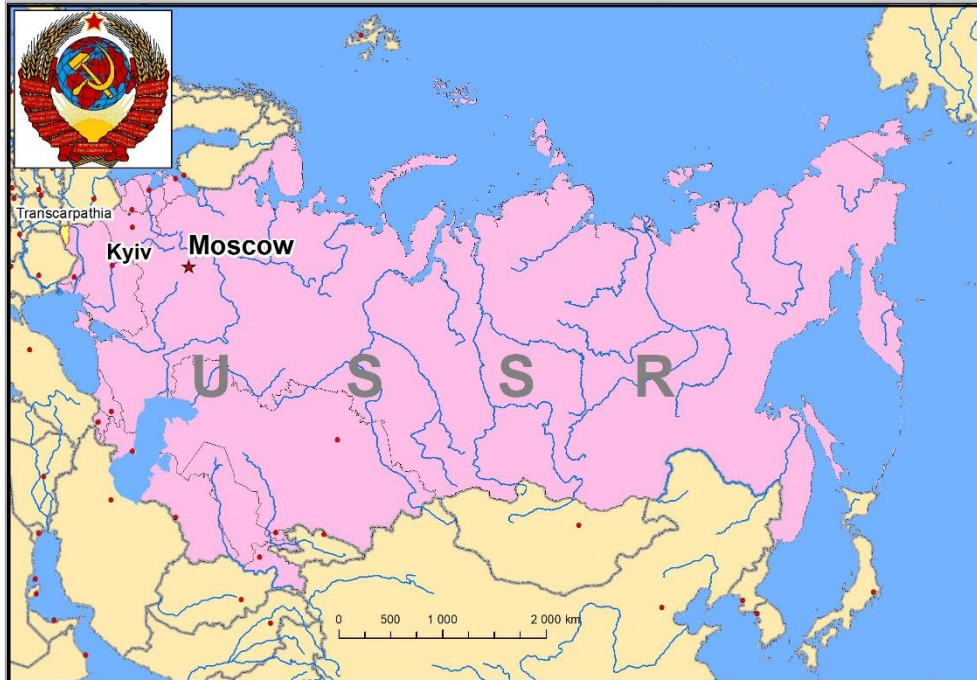The present-day Transcarpathia in Austro-Hungarian Monarchy

The present-day Transcarpathia in the Czechoslovak Republic

The present-day Transcarpathia in Hungarian Kingdom

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The present-day Transcarpathia in Soviet Union

Transcarpathia in Ukraine

On the way to Hoverla
(Photo by: Szabolcs Bunda)

The favorite anecdote of Transcarpathians provides a clear picture of the last 100 years of Transcarpathia...

„A visitor, encountering one of the oldest local inhabitants, asks about his life. The reply: 'I was born in Austria-Hungary, I went to school in Czechoslovakia, I did my army service in Horthy's Hungary, followed by a spell in prison in the USSR. Now I am ending my days in independent Ukraine.' The visitor expresses surprise at how much of the world the old man has seen. 'But no!', he responds, 'I've never left this village!'" (Batt 2002: 155)