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Nation Building Extended: Hungarian Diaspora Politics

The article aims to present and analyze Hungarian diaspora policy, the most recent aspect of Hungarian nation building politics. The first part of the paper builds on literature on various types of diaspora politics and tries to situate the Hungarian model in that framework. The second part introduces and analyzes the diaspora projects launched after 2010 in Hungary in order to realize the objectives of Hungarian diaspora politics. The paper claims that diaspora projects launched by the Hungarian government after 2010 form a coherent strategy aiming to reach the diaspora, to raise their awareness of their Hungarian heritage and culture, as well as to enhance their connection with the homeland.

Diasporas and diaspora politics

Academic interest on diaspora studies has been growing since the second half of the 20th century, which resulted in, as Rogers Brubaker argues, the confused use of the term “diaspora”.¹ The numerous definitions of diaspora usually operate with notions such as dispersion, community, collective memory and/or myth of a homeland, idea of return to the homeland, lack of complete integration into the host country, and responsibility towards the homeland.² However, these descriptions of diaspora were adapted to the “various intellectual, cultural and political agendas” that became defined as diaspora, and thus the term has not acquired a consensual definition in the scholarly literature.³ Brubaker therefore suggests that instead of thinking of diasporas as substantive entities and counting them as bounded groups we should rather use the term as referring to a “stance or a claim”. The avoidance of considering a diaspora as a bounded group is applicable in the case of the Hungarian “diaspora” as well since, as it is argued later in the paper, it is very heterogeneous and cannot

¹ Rogers Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1–19.

² William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (1991): 83–99, doi:10.1353/dsp.1991.0004; James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (August 1, 1994): 302–38.

³ Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora.”

be treated as a coherent group, despite, members of the diaspora are the subjects of the diaspora politics of the Hungarian government. As a result, the Brubakerian concept of diaspora is to be applied for the Hungarian diaspora as well.

According to Tölölyan, four factors were central in the “popularization” of the term diaspora and thus contributed to the rapid growth of interest in diaspora studies: the success and aftermath of the civil rights movement in the USA which raised public awareness to the “Black diaspora”; the rise of Jewish diaspora lobby during the 1967 war and the “re-diasporization of ethnicity” following it; the liberalization of the American Immigration Act which resulted in a great influx of migrants to the US; and finally the growing academic interest of notions of identity and diversity after the 1960s.⁴ The proliferation of the use of diaspora resulted in the creation of numerous typologies. Based on the reasons of dispersal, Robin Cohen set up five categories of diasporas: victim, labor, imperial, trade, and cultural.⁵ By victim diasporas he means classical groups which dispersed due to persecution (Jews) or to other traumatic factors such as famine (Irish). He handles trade, labor and imperial diasporas as subgroups of an umbrella category where the reason for emigration was social mobility and he mentions several examples, e.g. European migrants in the US at the end of the 19th century, Chinese traders, or the British imperial diaspora in the Southern hemisphere. As for cultural diasporas, his argument is that Caribbean people share the same experiences of colonization which manifest in shared cultural expressions. Although Cohen argues that the notion ‘diaspora’ has a strong biblical overtone and is not understandable without the Jewish archetype, he develops further categories which fit modern diaspora formations as well. Cohen’s typology is useful if one wants to investigate diasporas from a historical perspective, however, it proves to be insufficient when analyzing contemporary diaspora entities which are the result of various emigration waves that were provoked by different (political, economic) reasons – as is the case for many East-Central European diasporas in North America.

A contrasting typology is provided by Milton J. Esman, who argues that instead of defining the reason of dispersal of the given diaspora, one should categorize them according to their present function in the

⁴ Khachig Tölölyan, “Diaspora Studies. Past, Present and Promise. Working Paper” (International Migration Institute, 2012), <http://www.migration.ox.ac.uk/odp/pdfs/WP55%20Diaspora%20studies.pdf>.

⁵ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

host country.⁶ Thus he suggests three categories: settler, labor and entrepreneurial. Esman's definition may seem more applicable since the initial reasons of emigration have already lost their significance for many diasporas. However, Esman's typology is just as limited as Cohen's inasmuch as they both treat diasporas as bounded and cohesive groups without internal diversity. Another typology is defined by Janine Dahinden, who approaches diasporas (or, in her own words, transnational formations) from the perspective of mobility and locality.⁷ Mobility means the degree of physical mobility of the person with transnational ties, whereas locality means the degree of embeddedness of the person in the host country. The categories Dahinden defines are: localized diasporic transnational (where mobility is low but locality is high), localized mobile transnational (where both mobility and locality are high), transnational mobile (where mobility is high but locality is high), and transnational outsider (where both mobility and locality are low). Dahinden does not differentiate between diaspora and transnational formations, however, her article illuminates one of the definitive characters of diasporas, which is the presence of effective local ties in the host country. Dahinden's typology manages to overcome the bounded nature of both Cohen's and Esman's "diasporas" inasmuch as her unit of reference is the individual and not the diaspora per se, and thus, her typology can be used to describe diasporas of heterogeneous social, cultural and political background,

Diaspora politics is a broad concept which might embody the politicization and political behavior of diasporas, their relationship with the home and the host country, as well as the efforts of the home country to engage its diaspora in its affairs (be it political, economic, social, etc.). The role of diasporas in international relations and ethnic conflict resolution has acquired academic attention in the past two decades as well.⁸

⁶ Milton J. Esman, "Definition and Classes of Diasporas," in *Diasporas in the Contemporary World* (Cambridge, UK, Malden, USA: Polity, 2009).

⁷ Janine Dahinden, "Dynamics of Migrants' Transnational Formations: Between Mobility and Locality," in *Diaspora and Transnationalism. Concepts, Theories and Methods*, ed. Rainer Baubock and Thomas Faist (Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

⁸ Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 57, no. 3 (July 1, 2003): 449–79; Bahar Baser and Ashok Swain, "Diasporas as Peacemakers: Third Party Mediation in Homeland Conflicts," *International Journal on World Peace* 25, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 7–28.

One comprehensive set of diaspora politics (referred to as transnational political practices by the author) is given by Eva Østergaard-Nielsen. Østergaard-Nielsen argues that transnational practices can be initiated by both members of the diaspora and the home country as well. In the former case, political developments or environmental disasters in the country of origin can trigger the engagement of both recent migrants and “established diasporas” as well.⁹ In the latter case, when diaspora politics is initiated by the homeland, the motivation can be often of economic nature, namely persuading the diaspora to send remittances back home or to support the homeland’s economy through investments. Besides economic benefits, prospects for the diaspora’s professional resources or political support (lobby in the host country) may also be appealing for home country governments. However, depending on the contemporary interest of the sending country, encouraging return migration has sometimes priority over the solidification of and keeping contact with the diaspora, as is usually the intent of newly emerged nation states like Israel and Armenia (though intensive homeland–diaspora relations are equally important for these countries).

Further motivations can be behind diaspora politics as well. For example, demonstrating the homeland’s responsibility towards expatriates carries an important message for the “mainland” constituency and therefore can be considered as a way of reinforcing the electorate of political party “at home” by demonstrating the government’s engagement towards co-nationals abroad. Moreover, the political incorporation of the diaspora after regime changes can serve as a symbolic restitution and compensation for those who left the country because of political persecution,¹⁰ as is the case for many post-communist countries in East-Central Europe. In certain cases the betterment of the situation of the diaspora in the host country may require efforts from the homeland government, which might be another relevant reason to initiate transnational engagement projects.¹¹

However, it is important to emphasize that sending countries should not be taken for granted as the sole initiators of transnational practices; these projects are more often reactive than pro-active, and

⁹ Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, “The Politics of Migrants’ Transnational Political Practices. Working Paper” (Transnational Communities Programme, 2001), <http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%20papers/WPTC-01-22%20Ostergaard.doc.pdf>.

¹⁰ Szabolcs Pogonyi, “Four Patterns of Non-Resident Voting Rights,” *Ethnopolitics*, November 2013, 1–19, doi:10.1080/17449057.2013.846041.

¹¹ Østergaard-Nielsen, “The Politics of Migrants’ Transnational Political Practices. Working Paper.”

furthermore, whether any of the attempts to engage the diaspora turns out to be successful is very much dependent on the “societal and political-institutional context in the receiving countries”.¹² It is often argued that the longer a diaspora stays in the receiving countries, the less interest it has in the homeland’s affairs,¹³ however, factors like the reason of emigration as well as the cultural similarity of the emigrant group to the receptor population may also have a crucial impact on the degree of willingness to resonate to the homeland’s calling.¹⁴

Alan Gamlen, who gives a concise summary of recent diaspora politics in his paper entitled “The emigration state and the modern geopolitical imagination”, suggests that home countries can have two strategies to start the engagement of their diaspora: cultivating “diasporic identities and community structures” or “formally recognize existing diaspora communities”.¹⁵ To illustrate diasporic identity cultivation Gamlen mentions symbolic acts like the celebration of the “role of expatriates in the nation”, delegation of diplomats to the diaspora at national holidays, or hinting references to co-ethnics abroad in official statutes, and practical ones like financing national language media or broadcasting. Formal recognition of the diaspora usually starts with statistical procedures or the establishment of official bodies in charge of the diaspora (consulate, government offices, etc.). Gamlan separates diaspora engagement from diaspora integration, the later meaning the establishment of “reciprocal ties” between the homeland and the diaspora. It is usually manifested in the extension of political and/or social rights (citizenship, voting rights, availability of social benefits) to the diaspora from the side of the state, in turn of which the state might expect political and/or economic benefits (investments, “expatriate tax”, lobby, political participation in the homeland elections) from the diaspora. The cases of two of the classic diasporas,¹⁶ the Jewish and the Armenian in the United States

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Kenneth D. Wald, “Homeland Interests, Hostland Politics: Politicized Ethnic Identity among Middle Eastern Heritage Groups in the United States,” *International Migration Review* 42, no. 2 (July 1, 2008): 273–301.

¹⁵ Alan Gamlen, “The Emigration State and the Modern Geopolitical Imagination,” *Political Geography* 27, no. 8 (November 2008): 840–56, doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2008.10.004.

¹⁶ Anthony D. Smith, “Diasporas and the Homelands in History: The Case of the Classic Diasporas,” in *The Call of the Homeland: Diaspora Nationalisms, Past and Present*, ed. Allon Gal, Athena S. Leoussi, and Anthony D. Smith (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010).

demonstrate clearly that the diaspora's effective lobby can be a real asset for the homeland's political affairs,¹⁷ which further explains the willingness of the homeland governments to improve their ties with the diaspora.

Although birthright journeys do not appear among the popular "tools" of diaspora politics on Gamlen's list, these programs have been practiced by several countries with significant diaspora as a remarkable step on the way of diaspora engagement. The essence of birthright journeys lies in a positive personal experience attached to the home country; these programs call upon young individuals in the diaspora who are of the given country's origin to join for a journey (usually free of charge, or requiring only symbolic financial contribution from the participant) in the frame of which the "home country" is (re)discovered by them. As Kelner argues, "[d]rawing on nationalist assertions of inherent connections between people, culture, and place these [birthright tourism] strategies seek to unite globally dispersed populations by fostering a sense of shared belonging in a common political community that is simultaneously territorialized and deterritorialized, rooted and uprooted."¹⁸ The working mechanism of birthright journeys is clear: it operates with highly emotional experiences by presenting the idealistic "homeland" and by bringing together same-aged youngsters who have in common their ethnic (or religious) ancestry, the latter being crucial in creating and maintaining group boundaries.¹⁹

In order to situate the Hungarian case among the various diaspora politics model, one has to first examine the characteristic features of the Hungarian diaspora. As claimed earlier, the Hungarian diaspora as such is the result of various emigration waves – various in terms of time, reason, social background of the emigrants, location of emigration, level of integration in the new state, level of connection to Hungary, and linguistic skills (both in Hungarian and in the

¹⁷ Tony Smith, *Foreign Attachments: The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2000); Yossi Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad: Diasporas in the U.S. and Their Homelands* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Patrick J. Haney and Walt Vanderbush, "The Role of Ethnic Interest Groups in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Case of the Cuban American National Foundation," *International Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (June 1, 1999): 341–61.

¹⁸ Shaul Kelner, *Tours That Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

¹⁹ Jillian L. Powers, "Reimagining the Imagined Community Homeland Tourism and the Role of Place," *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 10 (October 1, 2011): 1362–78, doi:10.1177/00027642111409380.

language of the host state).²⁰ Despite the obvious heterogeneity of the Hungarian diaspora, one might differentiate between two major subgroups, which can be labeled as the “old” and the “new” diaspora. The old diaspora embodies emigrants and their descendants who left Hungary because of the persecutions of the 20th century (World War I and II, communism, 1956 revolution),²¹ and whose presence in their new countries has been interpreted as “emigration” for a long time. The new diaspora, in contrast, consists of migrants who moved away from Hungary since the democratic transition (and to an enhanced extent since 2004, the EU-accession of the country), thus who left the country for economic, professional, perhaps educational reasons. Members of the new diaspora have a totally different attitude towards the home country, and they very often exhibit intensive transnational ties in the sense that they are more mobile and tend to have connections in both the home and the host country.

Measuring the number of members of the Hungarian diaspora is highly problematic, and we can rely on tentative estimates only. In 2013, the Hungarian government counted with 2,5-3 million Hungarians living in diaspora,²² which number is partly based on national statistics of the host countries and partly on the national statistics on emigration from Hungary. However, due to the intense migration scale and especially the free movement within the territory of the EU, the follow-up of migrating individuals became even more difficult, and as a result, it is doubted whether we can have any more exact data on the Hungarian diaspora.

Hungarian governments thus have to take into consideration the diverse nature of the Hungarian diaspora when defining the aims of its diaspora politics. The Policy Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad defines the integration of the “diaspora individual” into the diaspora community (and diaspora organizations) as the priority for Hungarian diaspora politics. Besides, enhanced connection to Hungary from the side of the diaspora, strengthening the national identity of the diaspora, exploitation of the economic, professional potential of the diaspora as well as their ability to improve the image of Hungary abroad, and finding and reaching the newest diaspora

²⁰ For a detailed summary of Hungarian emigration waves to the USA see Andrew Ludanyi’s paper in the present volume of *Minority Studies*.

²¹ The „old” diaspora has to be supplemented with the economic migrants and their descendants of the turn of the 19th-20th century who settled in North America.

²² “Magyar Nemzetpolitika – A Nemzetpolitikai Stratégia Kerete,” (Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad) 2013, https://www.nemzetiregiszter.hu/download/a/12/10000/nemzetpol_strat_2_2013.pdf.

appear as strategic goals in the document.²³ Although it is not listed among the priorities of Hungarian diaspora politics in the Policy Framework, political mobilization of the diaspora might be a valid objective as well, since from 2014 non-resident citizens of Hungary are allowed to vote at the national elections. Thus, the electoral potential of the Hungarian diaspora might be a significant factor, however, diaspora population has not exhibited remarkable interest in the political affairs of the home country so far.

Hungarian diaspora politics since 2010

The landslide victory of Fidesz (center-right, conservative party) in 2010 meant a huge turning point in many respects of Hungarian kin-state politics. The most significant step was obviously the amendment of the Law on Citizenship which enabled non-resident ethnic Hungarians to apply for Hungarian citizenship. The possibility of preferential naturalization was soon followed by the extension of political rights to dual citizens, which meant that non-resident citizens became eligible to vote at the Hungarian national elections. Besides these, the Orbán-government introduced many symbolic measures, furthermore, it laid down the foundations of Hungarian diaspora politics as well, which – in certain regards – became separated from kin-state policy.

Although kin-state policy has been a central concern of Hungarian governments since 1990, interestingly, Hungarian diasporas enjoyed very little attention from the homeland before 2010. The second Orbán-government has been the first to introduce a structured policy to call for and engage diaspora Hungarians, and these measures were inserted – at least rhetorically – in the logic of the revised kin-state politics. One of the central mottos of post-2010 kin-state politics has been the propagation of the “unified and single Hungarian nation”, which in the government’s interpretation refers to a spiritual and symbolic unification of the nation, without any revisionist (territorial) claims, and in which there is room for all Hungarians, regardless of their residence, and, in the case of the diaspora, regardless of their command of the Hungarian language. The “discovery” of the diaspora led to the launching of a series of programs addressing the target group, as well as to institutional reforms.

In 2010, when the consultative forum for members of the Hungarians Parliament and members of Hungarian communities abroad, the Hungarian Standing Conference (Magyar Állandó Értekezlet

²³ Ibid. pp.31-32.

– MÁÉRT) was convened anew for the first time after 2004,²⁴ the government decided to set up a separate consultative forum exclusively for diaspora organizations. With that measure, the government basically separated the coordination bodies of transborder Hungarians and diaspora Hungarians (although the diaspora is still represented in the Hungarian Standing Conference by one person per region). This implies that the different characters, needs and approaches of the two kinds of “Hungarians abroad” have been officially admitted. Thus we can claim that Hungarian kin-state and diaspora politics became separated from each other in institutional terms after 2010.

Diaspora politics differ from kin-state politics not only in institutional terms, but in their objectives as well. One of the initial steps of diaspora engagement policy was the launch of Hungarian Register (Nemzeti Regiszter), a virtual database for Hungarians worldwide, which provides weekly newsletter on Hungarian politics both in Hungarian and English. Its primary aim was to re-channel those who have lost contact with the homeland and to give them an up-to-date view about the home country. In fact, Hungarian Register has extended its function: it does not only serve to give information about Hungary to the diaspora but vice versa as well; diaspora organizations are allowed to share their news and events on the webpage. Thus, Hungarian Register fulfills one of the most important goals of Hungarian diaspora politics as defined in the Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad: to raise awareness of the diaspora in the homeland’s current affairs and to reinforce their connection to Hungary.

Secondly, a cultural revitalization program (called Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Internship) was launched in 2012 in the frame of which young Hungarians travel to diaspora organizations and help them in organizing cultural events, heritage cultivation or language education. The internship takes six months and diaspora organizations work as hosting institutions for the interns. The program was welcomed with great enthusiasm and satisfaction by diaspora organizations, and already after the pilot year the budget of the program and thus the number of interns was doubled in 2014.²⁵ The tasks of the interns are

²⁴ The socialist-liberal governments did not convene the Hungarian Standing Conference between 2004 and 2010 due to the deteriorated relationship of the Hungarian government and minority Hungarian communities abroad, which was the result of the failed referendum on dual citizenship in 4 December 2004.

²⁵ Bálint Fabók, “Felrázták Az Elfelejtett Magyarokat (The Shake-Up of Forgotten Hungarians),” [Http://www.origo.hu/](http://www.origo.hu/), accessed April 9, 2014, <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20131111-korosi-csoma-sandor-program-a-diaszporaban-elo-magyaroknak.html>.

defined by the conditions and needs of the hosting institutions, therefore they can vary from location to location. Most often the interns are involved in organizing cultural events, festivals, commemorations of national holidays, but providing Hungarian language education or children's programs can also apply. Besides, taking stock of diaspora organization's heritage and carrying out basic research tasks are also done by the interns at certain locations. The Kőrösi Csoma Internship thus aims to help the diaspora in preserving their identity and culture, and by sending Hungarian interns to the communities, intensified relations to Hungary is also expected as an outcome of the program.

Another key program targets the (physical) heritage preservation of the diaspora. Mikes Kelemen Program was designed to collect Hungarian bequests – books, journals, photos, audiovisual records, personal collections – and to ship them back to Hungary. The program was launched in 2014, therefore the evaluation of the project is to be seen in the future. The idea is, however, to secure the “befitting utilization” of those heritages by disseminating them either to the National Széchenyi Library or to libraries of Hungarian kin-minorities in the neighboring countries.²⁶ A similar program called Julianus (since 2012) aims to list all Hungarian “memories” (streets named after Hungarians, statutes, plaques, etc.) and Hungarian-related places (cafés, bookshops) worldwide. The cadastre is available online²⁷ and can be extended by sending the name and address of the items with a photo or video to the State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad. Both the Mikes Kelemen and Julianus Programs have the agenda to initiate a more conscious cultivation of diaspora presence all around the world and to direct the attention of the diaspora (the old and the new as well) to their own heritage, and by doing so, to strengthen their Hungarian identity.

As a matter of fact, the availability of Hungarian culture has been offered by Hungarian cultural institutes (Balassi Institute) already before 2010 in many cities of the world. However, the scope of such institutions is very limited, as they usually operate in capital cities exclusively, which means that the geographically dispersed Hungarian communities cannot be expected to get involved in the events and programs of the institutes. Nonetheless, as those institutions have a twofold agenda: to spread and popularize Hungarian culture abroad for foreigners and second, to provide a “Hungarian location” for members of the diaspora, the operation of the Balassi

²⁶ <https://www.nemzetiregiszter.hu/mikes-kelemen-program>

²⁷ <https://mapsengine.google.com/map/viewer?mid=z3mbci7PDIIdA.kV11NcME-jvk>

Institute should be mentioned among the projects aiming to reach the Hungarian diaspora. Moreover, the activities of the Balassi Institute in the field of Hungarian language education abroad and its scholarships offered for the younger generation of the diaspora in order to improve their Hungarian linguistic skills further reinforces its place among the tools of Hungarian diaspora politics.

Considering the engagement of the younger generation of the diaspora, who in most cases have already lost their personal ties with the homeland of the ancestors, birthright journeys offer a great opportunity to re-awake the interest of the target population in the homeland. ReConnect Hungary, the Hungarian birthright program targets Hungarian Americans and Hungarian Canadians (the program is offered for the Hungarian diaspora in North America exclusively), and the Hungarian American diaspora itself played a highly proactive role in the initiation of the project. It was George Pataki, former governor of New York (who is very proud of his Hungarian ancestry), and his daughter, Allison Pataki who suggested the idea of a Hungarian birthright program, and some prominent personalities of the Hungarian American diaspora like László Hámos, president of the Kossuth Foundation (based in Washington, DC) and of the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation (based in New York City) embraced the idea. The first year when ReConnect Hungary was offered was 2012 and it was co-financed by the Hungarian government and by the Kossuth Foundation in approximately 50-50%.

ReConnect Hungary targets young Americans of Hungarian heritage aged 18-26 who have not lived in Hungary past the age of 13. Those who do not speak Hungarian are equally eligible for the program, and it does not matter how far one can trace his or her Hungarian ancestry. The organizers try to find those candidates who have no or only very limited knowledge about Hungary and few contacts to Hungarian culture. This also implies that the channels of advertisement have to be chosen carefully in order to reach optimal candidates. Beside the most effective networking sites such as Facebook, the organizers advertise ReConnect Hungary in the newsletters of the “old” Hungarian American organizations that were founded by (mostly economic) immigrants of the early 20th century.²⁸ The main “narrative” of ReConnect Hungary is that “Hungarians are innovative”, so that besides the natural beauties and historical sights of the country the participants can find another perspectives why they can be proud of their Hungarian heritage. The program offers tourist

²⁸ Máté Vincze, ReConnect Hungary - from the perspective of an organizer, interview by Eszter Herner-Kovács, February 24, 2014.

attractions in Budapest and the countryside, meetings with top politicians, introduction to business and commercial opportunities in Hungary (including the legal conditions of launching a venture in the country), meeting talented young Hungarian start-up entrepreneurs, innovative designers and directors of successful firms in Budapest.

The expected outcome of the Hungarian birthright journey is twofold. First, to “win” the participants for the ancient home country in various possible ways, for example to have “goodwill ambassadors” of Hungary who can contribute to spread the good reputation of the country, or to encourage them to foster American investments or any kind of business activity in Hungary in the future. The other expected outcome of the birthright journey is to involve the participants in the cultivation of Hungarian heritage in the United States. The majority of the Hungarian American institutions’ management is facing the problem of generational change and is struggling to find successor leaders. ReConnect Hungary therefore aims to contribute to this process by encouraging the participants to get involved and to take a more active role in the life of the Hungarian American community and organizations in their home when they return to the US.

As the last one among “diaspora projects” since 2010 one has to mention the political integration of the diaspora into the Hungarian nation. As claimed earlier in the paper, the second Orbán-government made Hungarian citizenship available for non-resident Hungarians. The criteria of acquiring Hungarian citizenship are the command of the Hungarian language and an official document proving that the applicant has a predecessor who was a Hungarian citizen. Although preferential naturalization is primarily designed for Hungarian kin-minorities living in the states surrounding Hungary, diaspora Hungarians are equally eligible for citizenship. However, the latter’s interest in obtaining Hungarian citizenship has been remarkably lower than that of Hungarians in the neighboring countries. Similarly, diaspora members exhibited little activism at the 2014 national elections; only a couple of thousand persons in the diaspora registered on the electoral list.²⁹ This fact implies that the Hungarian diaspora is politically inactive, therefore their political mobilization should be encouraged in order to complete their integration in the homeland’s political community.

Many of the diaspora projects launched after 2010 apply to both the old and the new diaspora. Although the work on cultural revitalization of

²⁹ Number of registrations for the 2014 national elections: http://valasztas.hu/hu/ogyv2014/766/766_5_1.html (downloaded 30 November 2014)

Kőrösi Csoma interns happens within the old diaspora institutions, members of the new diaspora are equally welcome to join the events and programs. Similarly, the registration of Hungarian-related places and memories for the Julianus program is open to anybody living in the diaspora, as is the possibility to subscribe in the Hungarian Register. On the other hand, Mikes Kelemen Program and ReConnect Hungary essentially targets members of the old diaspora; the former offers the transfer of personal collections back to Hungary, the latter wants to evoke connection to the homeland of the ancestors in the younger generation of Hungarian Americans. Concerning the option of preferential naturalization, it is again mostly applicable for the old diaspora, since members of the new diaspora did not lose their Hungarian citizenship when they left the country, while those who emigrated under communism were deprived of it.

Although half of the diaspora projects are designed to be able to affect members of the new diaspora as well, an important deficiency of the newly elaborated diaspora politics of Hungary is that there is no strategy which would ensure the finding of this (constantly growing) segment of the target population. It would be important to work out a strategic plan to find, reach and address – and probably channel into the old diaspora institutions – the members of the new diaspora, so that the goals of Hungarian diaspora strategy could be realized to the fullest extent.

Conclusions

The international toolkit of diaspora politics offers a range of possibilities for homeland governments to reach and engage their diaspora. Based on the characteristic features of the diaspora, Hungarian diaspora politics managed to define its primary goals: the integration of the “diaspora individual” into the diaspora community and its organization; enhanced connection to Hungary from the side of the diaspora; strengthening the national identity of the diaspora; exploitation of the economic, professional potential of the diaspora as well as their ability to improve the image of Hungary abroad; and finding, “identifying” and reaching the members of the newest diaspora. For most of these priorities the Hungarian government has found the tools and programs that can best foster the realization of these objectives, and thus the governmental projects launched after 2010 make up a coherent system which can be inserted in the international practice of diaspora politics.