

Ildikó OROSZ - Natália VÁRADI

Talent Support in Transcarpathia

1. Initiatives and options of the Hungarian ethnic minority in Transcarpathia

In the context of globalisation, the chances of the Hungarian ethnic minority in Transcarpathia are decisively influenced by the quality and modernity of education and training in their mother tongue – and the consequent options of economic activity and employment. The possibilities of learning, of acquiring a vocational qualification and of career changes are essential for the prosperity of the Hungarian national minority communities in their home country in the 21st century.

On 8 December 1991, the leader group of the Transcarpathian intelligentsia, the teachers, set out on the path of self-organisation, and the *Transcarpathian Hungarian Teachers' Association*¹ was formed by around fifty teachers. Today the organisation has 2200 members. During the years, thanks to the devoted work of the teachers saving no time, energy and sometimes even financial means, the Teachers' Association became an organisation the opinion, proposals and initiatives of which are worth heeding in matters concerning Hungarian education in Transcarpathia. We inherit our native tongue from our parents; we learn it from them in childhood, and that is how we can then use it in a natural way. We can express our thoughts best in our native tongue, and we can learn things most thoroughly in that language. We understand mathematics, chemistry, history and physics best in our native tongue. It is no accident, therefore, that *Közoktatás* (Public Education)², the professional periodical of the Transcarpathian Hungarian Teachers' Association (THPA) launched in 1994 considered it a priority goal to promote and assist teaching in the mother tongue. THPA launched its professional periodical not long after its foundation, to let teachers share their experience and report on their successes and concerns in its columns and hence promote teaching in the mother tongue. From the very start (1994), *Közoktatás*, the professional periodical of the Transcarpathian Hungarian Teachers' Association set itself the goal to assist

¹ <http://THPA.uz.ua/>

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the development of Hungarian education in Transcarpathia and the work of the teachers concerned, and to transfer knowledge through it that would make students completing their education there capable of coping in any university or college in Europe or elsewhere. *Közoktatás* gives schools and kindergartens an opportunity to introduce themselves. We present those who were most successful as teachers and whose life and work is a model example for the generations to come.

2. Supporters of Hungarian talent support in Transcarpathia

2.1. Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute

*Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute named after Ferenc Rákóczi II. (Beregszász)*³ has been the centre of the education and intellectual and cultural life of the local ethnic Hungarians since its foundation, as witnessed *inter alia* by the many cultural and scientific events organised by the College. Thus the College functions also as scientific workshop. Our teachers and staff members are the authors of many textbooks, educational aids, scientific monographs, educational publications, and our teachers represent the institution at many prestigious international conferences. Since 2000, the College has issued the scientific publications of the its teachers and students in a yearbook under the title of *Acta Beregsasiensis*. The goal of higher education is not only to transfer knowledge, but also to prepare people for their future life as members of the intelligentsia.

Economic development in Transcarpathia is inconceivable without the identification of young persons with outstanding knowledge and abilities, i.e. the talented, capable of extraordinary performance; without assistance to foster the unfolding of their gifts and without providing support to young researchers. To date, the screening, identification and continuous development of the highly gifted youth is a key factor determining the competitiveness of a given territory, and the various educational institutions and talent support organisations are assigned an outstanding role in this work. It was for this reason that the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute and the Transcarpathian Hungarian Teachers' Association created the "*GENIUS*" *Charitable Foundation*⁴ which carries out extensive talent nurturing and talent development and research activity under the sign of equal

³ <http://www.kmf.uz.ua/>

⁴ <http://www.genius-ja.uz.ua/>

opportunities among the pupils, students, university and college undergraduates and young researchers in Transcarpathia whose native tongue is Hungarian.

2.2. “GENIUS” Charitable Foundation

“GENIUS” Charitable Foundation is active in the area of the organisation of Hungarian informal education in Transcarpathia and in the related talent support field, functioning as a bridge between the systems of secondary and higher education.

The goal of the Foundation is to create an integrated system of talent support programmes; to provide equal access to talent support; to enhance the sense of social responsibility of the talented youth; to earn respect for the activity of the talent support staff and organisations and to provide as many opportunities as possible for extending the knowledge and skills of the talented pupils, students and researchers beyond the limits of the curriculum; to educate intelligent young people, the prospective generations of the Transcarpathian intelligentsia, and to gather together teachers committed to talent support and encourage their collective thinking and work.

2.2.1. Activity of “GENIUS” Charitable Foundation

“Genius” operates the Transcarpathian Higher Education Talent Support Council, the Transcarpathian Talent Support Council, the Zrínyi Ilona Transcarpathian Hungarian Vocational College. It organises the Conference of Young Researchers, the Conference of the Scientific Student Circles, the work of the Professional Subject Inspectors Providing Talent Support, seven talent points which cover the entire Transcarpathian region (which engaged 207 children in the school year of 2011/2012); it organises talent days and ensures that the young geniuses active in the talent points get to the subject competitions organised by THPA. Furthermore, it has various camps in the summer period.

2.2.2. Programme of “GENIUS” Charitable Foundation

No.	Activity	Time interval	Occasions/year
1.	Sessions of the Transcarpathian Higher Education Talent Support Council	January to December	8
2.	Sessions of the Transcarpathian Talent Support Council	January to December	10
3.	Sessions of the professional subject inspectors providing talent support	January to December	10
4.	Talent day (Beregszász)	January, June	2

5.	Getting students participating in the talent points to the THPA subject competitions	January to May	18 competitions
6.	Operation of seven talent points (Ungvár, Nagydobrony, Bányú, Beregszász, Újlak, Mezővári, Aknaszlatina)	September to December	for 4 months, on two weekends per month, divided into groups of humanities and natural sciences
7.	Operation of Ilona Zrínyi Vocational College	September to May	for 10 months
8.	Conference of Young Researchers	May	1
9.	Sports tournaments, semi-finals and finals	June	1
10.	Summer camps (sports, Nagyberég folk music/dance, Mária Jankovics Creative Camp)	July to August	1-1
11.	Conference of Scientific Student Circles	November	1

2.3. Talent support councils and talent points

2.3.1. Transcarpathian Council for Talent Support in Higher Education

Talent identification and support are especially important in regard of Transcarpathian undergraduates. To promote the unfolding of talents, the *Transcarpathian Council for Talent Support in Higher Education* held its inaugural session on 22 February 2011 in the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute. Its main goals are the following:

- To identify and support talented Hungarian undergraduates of the Transcarpathian HE institutions, to help them unfold their talents and to monitor their professional career.
- To operate the Zrínyi Ilona Transcarpathian Hungarian Vocational College
- To organise the Conference of Young Transcarpathian Hungarian Undergraduates and Researchers.
- To provide publication opportunities for the best works.
- To help students performing best at the Conference of Scientific Student Circles participate at international conferences.
- To develop Hungarian scientific language and thinking.

2.3.2. Transcarpathian Talent Support Council

The *Transcarpathian Talent Support Council* designed to help gifted secondary students realise their talents held its inaugural session on 16 March 2011 at the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute. Its main goals are the following:

- To supervise and organise the various talent selection and support activities specified and approved by the agencies.
- To identify, assist and support Hungarian talents educated in the Transcarpathian primary and secondary schools in the interest of unfolding their talents.
- To operate the talent points.
- To assist in the implementation of the subject competitions organised by THPA.
- To organise talent days for students entering for the THPA competitions and winning the first ten places, where they are also shown the values of local culture and arts besides the development of their knowledge and abilities.
- To organise talent support camps and weekends in co-operation with THPA.

2.3.3. Professional subject inspectors providing talent support Technical organisation and guidance associated with the subjects taught at the talent points is provide by the *subject inspectors* who have reporting obligation to the Talent Support Council. Their functions include *inter alia* the development of the training materials, task sheets, electronic training materials related to the various subjects, the compilation of timetables, the invitation of teachers teaching at the talent points to have lectures and conduct lessons.

The activities of the two Councils and the subject inspectors are closely intertwined and complementary.

2.3.4. The seven talent points

Seven talent points were created in autumn 2011, which cover the entire Transcarpathian area, in the following districts: Ungvár, Nagydobrony, Bányú, Beregszász, Újlak, Mezővári, Aknaszlatina. The mission of the talent points is to identify talented children and take them under their wings. Their sessions organised by subject groups – mathematics—IT—physics, biology—chemistry—geography, Hungarian language and literature – history -- history of arts, Ukrainian language – foreign language teaching – take place in the districts mentioned above, and in autumn 2011 a total of 2007 children participated. From September to December 2011, the youth were provided transport to the talent points where they could take part in lessons divided into groups of humanities and natural sciences, respectively. The activity of the talent points will continue in the academic year of 2012/2013 and from January to March 2013 we envisage e-talent support in every subject.

3. Talent support practices

3.1. Beregszász Talent Day

We have talent days twice a year, in January and in June, where the talented youth winning 1-10th position at the THPA subject competitions can go to presentations by talented and renown performers and artists coming from Transcarpathia and from Hungary, who had already done something important and may serve as role models for them. So the *First Transcarpathian Talent Day* was organised jointly as something of a year-end event on 2 June 2012 by “GENIUS” Charitable Foundation and Transcarpathian Hungarian Pedagogical Association. This was the closing event of the work of THPA and of “GENIUS” Charitable Foundation in the academic year of 2011/2012. The event was honoured by the presence of Zoltán Balogh, Hungarian Minister of Human Resources.

On this occasion, too, we tried to call the attention of the residents to the importance of dramatic art and of culture, music, dance and the arts in the broader sense. There are special traditions and values which represent the ever-renewing eternal values of the memory of a nation. There are famous Transcarpathian people, suitable to be the role models of those who live there; who will give them strength and whom the local youth may follow. This is particularly important now that financial concerns, money-grubbing and destitution ensnare the world and alienate the public from the sites of performance, culture and education which, however, are vital for ethnic Hungarians.

There is no artistic education in childhood, and this obviously aggravates the discovery and reception of the arts. Children seldom have opportunities that would bring them closer to the arts, to the theatre, to folk music and folk dance and to the national values, and make them love them or, for that matter, realise that they are gifted in them.

3.2. Participation of talented students at the THPA competitions

The Hungarian school is the cradle of the preservation and development of the culture of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community. Since its foundation, the Transcarpathian Hungarian Pedagogical Association has been organising, encouraging and supporting the teachers' initiatives to create equal opportunities for Hungarian students studying in their home country. The goal of the study competitions is to select gifted students and to provide an opportunity for primary and secondary school students with above-average gifts and competences to test

themselves against others. In modern pedagogy, differentiated, adaptive work is indispensable for the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and competences, and preparation training for the competitions is an essential component thereof. In this case, we offer an extra opportunity for the talented students to develop and apply their knowledge: the complex preparatory process itself and the competition rounds organised at different levels are closely intertwined and hence they provide ample ground for the development of the relevant knowledge, skills and competences.

The competitions assist the talent support work of the subject teachers and they contribute to the development of the quality of Transcarpathian Hungarian education and the presentation of its results and, last but not least, they provide the children a memorable community experience with a national content.

Student competitions have a growing effect on the students year on year, for they are not limited to the main subjects taught at school (mathematics, history, Hungarian language and literature, natural sciences etc.), but there are also various tradition-preserving and artistic contests. That gives the participants an opportunity to step out from the boundaries of their everyday studies and to show the best of their knowledge, i.e. what they are the best in relative to the other participants. Hungarian students find it more difficult to excel in competitions organised by Ukrainian public education due to their deficient knowledge of Ukrainian, but the student competitions organised and administered by the Association let them test their knowledge at equal chances.

Right after the formation of the Teachers' Association, as of 1994 already, some enthusiastic teachers set out to organise the first competitions such as the native tongue competition, the *Viktor Terebesi Memorial Competition in Mathematics*, and they embraced and assumed patronage of a *poetry recital competition on the Bátyú Poetry Day*. The 938 students performing best at the competitions were offered recreation possibilities in summer camps in Hungary, in the Visit Your Neighbours Reading Camp (*Szomszédoló Olvasótábor*), Túrístándi, The *King Matthias Knowledge of Your Country* camp organised in Lendva, the camps of the *Hungarian Environmental Education Association (Magyar Környezeti Nevelési Egyesület)*, the *fine arts camp in Bernecebaráti*, in camps in *Ibrány, Baktalórántháza*, the *Velence Pro Recreation Foundation Camp* and the *Zánka Camp for Children and the Youth*.

A complete system mobilising the Transcarpathian Hungarian schools has been established.

Competitions are organised in the natural sciences and the humanities subjects.

The traditional natural sciences competitions are the following: *Gordius test competition in mathematics*, *Ilona Zrínyi mathematics competition*, *Viktor Terebesi mathematics competition*, *Ferenc Szedlák memorial competition in mathematics*, and *competitions in biology, IT, physics and chemistry*. There are also traditional competitions in the humanities fields: *Kazinczy pronunciation competition*, *Mother Tongue (Édes anyanyelvünk) language usage competition*, *poem recital competition on the day of poetry*, *Karádi orthography competition*, *competitions in history, foreign languages, poetry recital by ethnic Hungarian children, respectively*.

It has become regular practice for the winner students of the Transcarpathian student competitions to test their knowledge against Hungarian students living in the Carpathian Basin, where they have produced good results. They took part with success in several such tournaments as the *József Öveges competition in physics*, *the István Hatvani competition in physics*, and *at the national rounds of the the Gordius, Ilona Zrínyi competitions in mathematics referred to above*, *the International Hungarian Mathematics Competition*, *the Károly Sajó Carpathian Basin Environmental Team Competition*, *the Lajos Vass folk music competition*, *the “Édes anyanyelvünk” language usage competition*, and *the Kazinczy pronunciation competition*. The mother tongue is one of the most valuable treasures of every nation. For Transylvanian Hungarians, it is also the key to survival that needs to be protected and nurtured. This is why the annual language usage competition organised by the Transcarpathian Hungarian Pedagogical Association is so important.

Besides the students who participate with success at the humanities competitions, the winners of the science competitions are also as successful as is warranted by their talents, and they graduate from colleges and universities in Ukraine and in Hungary.

Talent is a fragile asset: the earliest possible identification and development of gifted children, their commitment to positive objectives and their management imply serious professional challenges and also duties for every teacher. Besides advocating the interests of Transcarpathian Hungarian teachers and Hungarian education, the Transcarpathian Hungarian Pedagogical Association contributes to the extensive system of talent support activities also through the organisation of student competitions. The structure and integration into the teaching practice of the student competitions is really rich also in European and global comparison. THPA has every reason to be proud of its study competitions looking back on major traditions, which may promote the identification of gifted children studying in the

Transcarpathian Hungarian schools, their intellectual progress and the strengthening of their ties to the Hungarian national community.

Therefore, we deem it important that children showing outstanding performance at school and in the talent points should get to the THPA study competitions and test their knowledge in various subjects. Since problems of intercity transportation during the weekends as well as the scarcity of financial means in the countryside prevent many talented children from getting to the tournaments, in January-April 2012, Genius Charitable Foundation with the support of the *Gábor Bethlen Fund* assisted the young talents in getting to the student competitions organised in that period: they provided buses from the talent points to Beregszász, the venue of the competitions.

3.3. Conference of Scientific Student Circles and Conference of Young Transcarpathian Hungarian Researchers

Another branch of the programme of Genius Foundation is work with young undergraduates. On the Hungarian Day of Science, the Foundation organises a Conference of Scientific Student Circles and on that of the Ukrainian Day of Science, the Conference of Young Researchers for the undergraduates. The goal is to provide people working on their doctoral or PhD thesis in various sciences and young persons wishing to remain in education after graduation a possibility to present their results to a panel of eminent professionals who evaluate them in the various sections.

The Foundation organised the 6th *Transcarpathian Scientific Student Circle Conference* in November 2011, with the participation of 32 students in 3 science field sections, and the 8th *Conference of Young Transcarpathian Hungarian Researchers* in May 2012 with 27 researchers.

3.4. Ilona Zrínyi Transcarpathian Hungarian Vocational College

Gifted undergraduates who excel in scientific research may apply for admission to Zrínyi Ilona Transcarpathian Hungarian Vocational College.

THPA is the talent support workshop gathering together Transcarpathian Hungarian HE students, teachers and researchers. Its mission is to embrace the cause of the most talented Hungarian-speaking students studying in the Transcarpathian higher education institutions (in the fields of the natural sciences and the humanities, respectively), and to provide them, if possible, all they need for their studies so that they can achieve outstanding results. Eligibility

for admission by application to the Zrínyi Ilona Transcarpathian Hungarian Vocational College is limited to students in 3-5th grade, preparing for PhD studies and producing excellent results. Fluency in Hungarian is a precondition for teachers and students alike. Zrínyi Ilona Transcarpathian Hungarian Course provides organised training with the appropriate methods, preparing students for their future activity (intellectual career, scientific research PhD studies) in line with their objectives, in the form of *tutorial sessions* and other tuition methods. Tutorial sessions (min. 2 hours a week) are compulsory. Their training material is defined by the teacher based on curricula worked out in advance, with some supplements. It is possible to have consultations on study issues in progress according to the work regime. During the period of membership of Zrínyi Ilona Transcarpathian Hungarian Course, it is compulsory to write and publish at least one scientific work a year (an article, the material of a conference). It is also compulsory to participate and contribute orally personally at one scientific conference at least per year. Omission of the above leads to the termination of membership in Zrínyi Ilona Transcarpathian Hungarian Course. Another inevitable requirement is that the student's average study scores at the educational institution concerned should not be less than 4., and not less than 4.5 in the major professional subjects.

Ten young researchers take part in Zrínyi Ilona Transcarpathian Hungarian Course annually; their work is assisted by one tutor, i.e. a professional with scientific degree, each.

3.5. Summer camps

In the summer period, based on the activity shown at the talent points and on good results (1-10th position) at THPA competitions, children may take part in one of the various camps organised by THPA, the "GENIUS" Foundation or Pro Cultura Transcarpathica.

Everyone is keen on seeing the world, on making friends and having a good time. Summer camps are excellent for all that. Therefore, the organisations referred to above pay great attention to providing children summer camping and recreation opportunities at home or abroad.

3.5.1. Camps organised by THPA

The line of domestic camps was opened by the English-language *Bible camp*, organised for the first time in 1994. The programmes of the camp were open to anyone interested in the least bit in the English language. There was a well-trained teacher staff from the US, England, Scotland and Hungary who guaranteed that everyone should return home with a richer

knowledge of English. During the sessions of the week, the teachers studied the Bible in a playful form and by applying the methods of drama pedagogy. Students were given an opportunity to interpret the stories from the points of view of the protagonists of the stories. There was lots of singing, which liberated the participants and hence played a major role in community-building and laid the bases of tolerance, the willingness to help and patience. It was most important that the participants could communicate with teachers whose native tongue was English, because they heard live English talk, which would have been impossible in the framework of the school programme, and hence they could learn by hearing. In the conversations, the students paid heed also to grammatical correctness, for they could ask the teachers advice also while speaking.

Besides the English-language Bible camp, in subsequent years, the participants could rest also at the *Péterfalva camp of music, folk dance and craftsmanship* and “*Irka*” (Exercise Book) camp, in their mother tongue. The camps not only meant a pleasant time for the children, but also enriched them with useful knowledge and skills. At Péterfalva, everything was given for the youth to spend the holidays in a meaningful way, in an ideal, cultured environment. The inhabitants of the folk dance camp had the bank of River Tisza, an amusement park, well-equipped sports and tennis grounds at their disposal and they were received by some “obsessed” people. During the camp, they mastered the bases of folk dance with the assistance of renown professionals from Hungary, and became familiar with the dances of a given regional unit. Furthermore, folk dance and singing were also taught in beginner and advanced groups to ensure the professional development of every participant. The participants got acquainted with traditional folk art as the programme was enriched by beading, wood-carving and basket-making. Music called the camp-dwellers to the folk dance house in the evening. Students and teachers, beginners and advanced learners danced, played and sang together. It is a tradition that the camp ends with a gala programme, where they show to a large audience what they have mastered during the week.

While children keen on dancing and on folk music could expand their knowledge in a playful way in Péterfalva, in Beregszász, *ethnic Hungarian children* living in the diaspora deepened their friendship with the Hungarian language. The primary goal of that camp is to teach the native tongue and raise the campers’ awareness of being Hungarian. It is an old truth that the playing and even more singing games provide(s) the best method for learning a language, since children learn the words and expressions encountered in a poetic linguistic environment unnoticed, and they find it easier to master the laws and the specifics of a

language that way. Besides the songs and singing, manual activities also boost their vocabulary. For this reason, they could also learn clay-modelling and beading at the camp. They kept talking while working, linking the words with the activities and the terms they already knew. Drawing, painting, embroidery and origami also provided excellent opportunities for enriching their vocabulary. Children getting acquainted with the bases of Hungarian at the camp, for example, could thus learn the names of the parts of the body, of the animals and of objects in a playful way.

At the *Irka* camp, *intensive language-learning* is based on playing. Music, dance and games – this is what characterises life at the camp.

For children who like mathematics, we have launched the *Abacus math camp* to ensure the recreation and talent nurturing of children interested in mathematics, their playful education, and the review of the chapters left out from the school curriculum but indispensable for the competitions. Campers represent every primary and secondary school age group. Therefore, they are organised in groups, and hence every age group can develop its talents on the basis of the topics they have learned already. Theoretical sessions during the week are inevitably accompanied by the afternoon T-shirt batik programmes. The morning groups paint their T-shirts in different colours to indicate that they belong together. An urban scout skills competition is organised every year, where the children explore one town of the county. In addition, team competitions and lectures on interesting topics enrich the life of the camp every year.

We wanted to engage in camp life also nature-lover children besides those interested in mathematics, so the *Nature protection and natural history camp* was organised, for the first time in 2000. The camp is designed, as is already its tradition, to ensure entertainment and also learning by playing, to introduce nature and develop a liking for nature, to bring children closer to the natural environment in our country, to introduce them to the natural beauties and values of their direct environment, since they tend to know more about the fauna and flora of the rain forests from nature films and the relevant publications and about the protection of special species than those around them. The area of the Nagydobrony forestry seemed the most suitable for this purpose, where there is a game protection reserve which has hosted the camp for seven years. As of 2007, it has been organised in the Salánk forestry. Traditionally, a field diary is given to each participant in the beginning. They do the interesting assignments indicated in the diary and develop their observation skills during the week. Leisure activities include sports tournaments (football, chess, volleyball, agility). In the evening, they spend

the time singing, participating in quiz programmes, presentations and Activity. On the last day, there is also a tournament of several rounds: they take part in orienteering, and in the afternoon they can test their knowledge and agility against each other in quiz programmes.

The *Kelemen Mikes Traditionalist Creative Camp* following the traditions of the *Salánk Jurta Camp* was organised for the first time in summer 2004 in Salánk, with a profile extended to include fine arts and handicrafts. The camp is organised on the base of *the Kelemen Mikes Secondary School* in Salánk. During their one-week holiday spent there, campers deepen their knowledge of Hungarian history and, in addition, they master practical skills: they learn horse-riding and archery. Under the assistance of local experts and those coming from Hungary, they master the tricks of the typical handicrafts of the Magyar conquest (spinning and weaving, clay-making, leather-making, beading, wood-carving). The camp is also a way-of-life camp in some sense: children live in genuine felt yurts and can try on the typical costumes of the times of the Hungarian conquest and the middle ages. During the time of the first camp, some 30 artists from Hungary and Transcarpathia carved the 3-meter oak statue of St Stephen, the memorial plaque of Kelemen Mikes, the name plate with arms of the village of Salánk and they made a nice playing ground with wooden toys, up to the European standards, for the local kindergarten and school. Furthermore, they decorated the wall of the new school canteen with large-size frescos.

An annual 500-800 children can spend the summer holidays in a useful and pleasant way at the camps of the Teachers' Association.

It has become a tradition for the winners of the subject competitions to spend part of their holidays in camps organised in Hungary. The most frequent destinations in Hungary where they can travel with THPA are those in Velence and Zánka.

3.5.2. Camps organised by "GENIUS" Charitable Foundation

The Transcarpathian initiatives aiming at generating and developing the Hungarian teaching/educational, national and cultural identity are often successful, but their coverage is not complete and they give rise to new demands.

Folk culture and the arts, literature, folk art and the knowledge and understanding of the traditions as well as the sports provide attractive options for the development and preservation of the national identity of the participants. The group which is easiest to access thereby is that of school-age children. The plan of a programme comprising three 5-day summer camps designed to remedy the relevant deficiencies was developed on the basis of the

above and the programmes for similar purposes administered for years by THPA. The camps take place in the month of August, and they address primarily Transcarpathian school children who may choose from the following camps:

Nagybereg Folk Music and Folk Dance Camp

Camps focusing on singing, music and folk dance have their antecedents in Transcarpathia. THPA has organised such camps traditionally annually in Tiszapéterfalva. That camp is so popular, it is already at the edge of its capacity. It hosts mainly children from the neighbourhood, from Ugocsa, and many from other regions have never got there in recent years due to the problems of travelling from other regions and for financial reasons. It is considered commendable to expand this movement and to introduce it in diverse Transcarpathian regions in order to make it possible for a larger group to master/deepen the knowledge of the native tongue of folk music and folk dance. Musical education and the nurturing of the folk musical traditions do not receive adequate weight, and the camp set out to remedy those deficiencies *inter alia*, while also offering the children a meaningful summer programme. The musical development of the campers is ensured by theoretical as well as practical training, comprising instrumental musical and dance education with the contribution of professionals and artists from Transcarpathia and from Hungary and, furthermore, various leisure activities are offered to ensure that the children have a good time during the five days of the camp.

Mária Jankovics Creative Camp

The other event scheduled under the summer programme framework addresses primarily pupils interested in the fine arts, in drawing, painting and the handicrafts, mainly with the help of Transcarpathian artists, on the base of the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute. Mária Jankovics was a Transcarpathian painter who died young, the designer/graphic designer of the image of the only Hungarian children's paper, *Irka*, founded by THPA, and the camp was designed to preserve her memory. Besides the theory and practice of drawing and painting, the young participants may test their skills also in practice and learn the bases of ceramics making, clay-making and sculpture.

Sports camp

School-children committed to the sports from various areas of Transcarpathia may take part in sports camps organised in Fonyód, Hungary. The many tasks related to organisation and other activities associated with the programmes organised for those students are accomplished by Niké Sportegyesület. Time at the Fonyód sports camp is spent in serious

training held by renown local coaches of the various sports branches. Special effects of the programme include the development of the sense of belonging together, of solidarity and loyalty, so rare in our days, and the reinforcement of the sense of being Hungarian, overarching the frontiers, by significantly boosting personality development at the same time. The first sports camp organised in the summer of 2011 hosted 60 young sportsmen; in 2012, the camp had 90 participants already.

Business camp for the youth

*Calasanctius Scholarship Foundation*⁵ together with Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute and “GENIUS” Charitable Foundation has organised this year its fifth Business Camp for the Youth which enjoyed great success in previous years. The teachers of the Budapest-based foundation, partly IÜP alumni and partly business management professionals who took part in the US scholarship programme train the local Hungarian youth for a week in the rules of business life. The mission of the Foundation is to provide secondary school students in their final year and to college students practice-oriented business and entrepreneurial skills matching the local circumstances, while giving special emphasis to fundamental moral and ethical norms. During the week, students listen to presentations on business planning, marketing, financial planning and business ethics. Furthermore, through local professionals, they acquire knowledge on the effective local taxation and administrative regulations and, more generally, the economic situation in Transcarpathia, of relevance for the enterprises, and on ideas for setting up small businesses. During the week, the afternoons are spent in joint team work, where the participants may practice interactively the presentation and negotiation techniques and work on their business idea chosen in the beginning of the week. The practical goal for the students is to present their respective business plans to a professional evaluation board by the end of the week; to demonstrate that their project represents a feasible, financially relevant idea.

⁵ The Calasanctius Training Program (CTP) was called to life by retina surgeon Dr. Péter Forgách from Buffalo, New York in 1994 when it became possible for Hungarian students to receive regular scholarship support at some universities and health care institutions in the US. [...] After their return home, the alumni of Calasanctius Training Program, expressing their commitment and gratitude also by action, created in 1999 the Hungarian Calasanctius Scholarship Foundation to establish the Hungarian financial basis of the operation of the Program. The Foundation, which was registered by the Metropolitan Court of Budapest in January 2000, considers it a priority goal to provide support to the scholarship-holders studying under difficult financial conditions and to enhance, indirectly, the value of charity donations and voluntary work in public thinking. Except for the program director appointed to fulfil the operational tasks, the Foundation works with volunteer. Five teams were set up in January 2007 to ensure smooth functioning, focusing on recruitment, selection, contact-keeping with universities in the United States, internal and external communication, operation of the youth business programme and establishment of the financial basis, respectively.” (For more detailed information, see the CTP website at: <http://ctpinfo.hu/>, date of downloading: 09.09.2012)

Balázs Keresztyén Reading Camp

The first Balázs Keresztyén Reading Camp was organised in 2011, through the co-operation of Genius Foundation and the NGO Pro Cultura Transcarpathica, and it gave an opportunity to realise innovations which expand the process of reading and convert it into a creative activity. Reading may appear to be a passive form of communication and, unfortunately, the traditional methods of literary research support that concept. “Only the world of the reader and of the book exists”. The camp, on the other hand, is dedicated to changing this concept of its participants by emphasising reading as an active type of communication shaping cultural identity and one’s view of the world and attempting to open a new “world of books” to the participants by applying new methods and techniques. Since this would be the first such camp, each day would be allocated to the secrets of a genre, a literary form, the options, worlds and roles it offers. It is also an effort in honour of the memory of Balázs Keresztyén, teacher of Hungarian language and literature in Nagyszőlős and founder and member of the presidium of THPA, who wrote his Lexicon of the Cultural History of Transcarpathia after the systems change, based on archives research. From summer 2012 on, the camp is realised by NGO Pro Cultura Transcarpathica, with the contribution of THPA.

3.6. “With co-operation for the Transcarpathian Hungarian sports talents” programme

Assistance to the talented is important not only in the sciences, but also in the arts and the sports, although we have paid less attention to that in recent years. “GENIUS” Charitable Foundation together with the NGO Pro Cultura Transcarpathica organised semi-finals and finals in four regions of Transcarpathia – Ung, Ugocsa, Máramaros, Bereg – in volleyball, basketball, team handball, table tennis and chess in September 2011 and, subsequently, the winner teams took part in the regional finals in Beregszász in the same categories.

That programme links school and competitive sports in a novel way. We firmly believe that sport plays an outstanding role in the pedagogical and health care sense also in our days. We tend to do tragically little sports today, and that has a detrimental effect on our physical and mental state. This is why there are so many aggressive children and teenagers with so many addictions, unable to find their place. A child who regularly does sports performs better at school and keeps away from addictions and, not in the least, channels the accumulating tensions and aggression in a useful way and becomes more balanced both spiritually and intellectually. Those who have the highest scores in the competition categories obtain Talentum vouchers entitling them to go to the Fonyód Sports Camp.

3.7. “Transcarpathia in the arts; the arts in Transcarpathia” drawing competition

“GENIUS” Charitable Foundation announced a drawing contest under the title of *Transcarpathia in the arts; the arts in Transcarpathia*. The competition works can be made with any technique, in A/4 or A/3 format, on various toposes such as e.g. my favourite memory, my place of residence in a hundred years’ time, self portrait, dream worlds, seasons, family tree etc., and they are evaluated and given scores by a professional jury. The best get Talentum vouchers for participation in the Mária Jankovics Creative Camp.

3.8. Programmes for ethnic Hungarians in Transcarpathia

In Transcarpathia, ethnic Hungarians live in the former counties of Máramaros, Ung and Ugocsa and the scattered Hungarian settlements in the valley of the Latorca and Borzsa, respectively. From the point of view of minority typology, certain towns characterised by lively Hungarian cultural life and a Hungarian population with strong interest assertion capacity only a few years ago can also be regarded as diaspora settlements, despite the significant decrease of the relative share of Hungarians and of their self-organisation in the meantime. Consequently, Ungvár, Munkács, Nagyszőlős, Visk, Técső and Aknaszlatina must also be regarded as diaspora areas today, albeit the genuine “classical” diaspora settlements are those in the Upper Tisza region and Szolyva in Latorca Valley.

The use of the Hungarian language is restricted in these communities to the church and the family in the narrow sense. It was first of all the *language of grandmothers and their grandchildren*. More general and extensive interest in the Hungarian language and the first forms of studying it appeared in the diaspora regions at the end of the 1980s. Children met with the language in an organised way first at their religious education lessons.

The Transcarpathian Hungarian Pedagogical Association has treated the issue of the linguistic awareness-raising of Hungarian children and the organisation and co-ordination of the teaching of their native tongue since its foundation. In the academic year of 2010/2011, our Association supported 53 teachers at the diaspora of Transcarpathia who taught Hungarian to a total of almost one thousand children. The THPA staff are in permanent work contact with the local teachers whom they provide methodological advice, textbooks, teaching aids and illustrative materials and technical devices. We organise poem recital competitions and camps for the children.

We provide regular in-service training to the Sunday School teachers. We provide them extramural methodological consultations during the year, and in-service training opportunities at home and in Hungary. We consider it the result of the effective work of the Sunday Schools that Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute has applicants from the ethnic Hungarian areas year on year who will, hopefully, return to their native area to nurture their traditions and develop the Sunday Schools even further. Currently, the Institute has regular and correspondence students from Rahó, Kőrösmező, Huszt, Nagybocskó and Aknaszlatina. Many of those in the senior year engaged in work (30 of the finalists so far) for a shorter or longer time in the Transcarpathian diaspora area. It is always difficult to start a career, but even more so for teachers who, after graduation, start at the schools and kindergartens of the areas inhabited by ethnic Hungarians, despite the fact that they will have to work there under more difficult conditions than their coevals. The youth who set out to revive the almost forgotten Hungarian language and traditions, disseminate Hungarian culture and educate talented children in an alien environment, often at a distance of 200 km from their home, are characterised by a sense of mission and commitment worthy of respect.

4. Summary

In summary we can say that during talent identification we pick out the above-average talents characterised by special abilities and high-level creativity and task commitment. We possess a complex set of closely interlinked and hierarchically structured talent support programmes.

Our projects and programmes are implemented with the assistance of Transcarpathian Hungarian teachers and professionals who had demonstrated their competence, and have an adequate professional history and references to fulfil the above tasks in compliance with the requirements and the goals which guarantee success and recognition every time.

To attain the above-described goals, i.e. to let well-trained young persons in command of in-depth knowledge enter the stage of LIFE, it is indispensable to raise a quality society of Hungarian teachers, to provide them in-service training, reinforce their sense of identity and upgrade their professional knowledge; to introduce them to new methodological tricks and the processes taking place in both the Hungarian and the Ukrainian educational system, to be able to apply the new methods ever more effectively in their work. To raise students who can cope both domestically and internationally. This is why the local organisations and

institutions such as Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute, a Transcarpathian Hungarian Pedagogical Association or “GENIUS” Charitable Foundation and the Pro Cultura Transcarpathica keep working, saving no effort, time and energy.

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