
Sacked Hungarian lecturers fail to get re-instated

(Wednesday, 17 January 2007) - by Marianne Tharan-Trieb

The two lecturers at the Transylvanian University Babes-Bolyai in Cluj – Kolozsvár, Dr. Péter Hantz and Dr. Lehel Kovács, who were sacked last November after they erected some signs in Hungarian, such as ‘Information’ and ‘No smoking’, have not been re-instated in their posts.

In spite of numerous e-mail protests sent by private persons, the call by 24 Hungarian MEPs for the reinstatement of the lecturers, as well as the several solidarity demonstrations in various cities in Transylvania, the lecturers remain unemployed.

Several Hungarian-speaking university staff have resigned out of solidarity, but now the management are advertising to fill the vacancies. The lecturers are not only deprived of their career prospects at the university but in mid-December the Babes-Bolyai University filed a police report charging the two lecturers with vandalism. The Romanian Police were called in and asked for statement from the fired lecturers, which they refused to give.

Last December more than 75% of the Hungarian speaking lecturers signed a petition asking for the establishment of a Hungarian-language Faculty of Natural Sciences at the Babes-Bolyai University. Students also gathered signatures.

The Romanian Minister of Education has decided to establish a commission of inquiry on the issue. MEPs expect the Romanian Commissioner for Multilingualism, Leonard Orban to investigate the events as well.

Furthermore, participants at November’s European Conference on Higher Education of Minorities have called on European political leadership to take firm steps in order to end the minority discrimination experienced in Romania. The participants expressed their astonishment in their closing declaration stating that, “there is a national minority in Europe, numbering 1.5 million souls, which neither possess an independent state-financed university in their mother tongue, nor benefits from cultural autonomy, they are the Hungarians in Romania.” (Eurolang 2007)