

MAY 2022

Hungarian Roman Catholic School in Târgu Mureş – Marosvásárhely Closed Down Again

SUMMARY: *In May 2022 the Romanian Supreme Court upheld a decision to dissolve the Hungarian Roman Catholic High School in the city of Targu Mures/Marosvásárhely. Romanian extremist organizations had twice bought suit against the reconstituted institution first established in 1702 and nationalized by the communists in 1948. Restituted on paper in 2004, the church had never been able to fully reoccupy its property. The local court dissolved the reconstituted institution in 2017 after a legal challenge by the county prefect representing the national government. Hope arose in 2018 when a Hungarian–Romanian bilateral government agreement was reached on the school, and an August ministerial decree allowed this, and since Romanian Orthodox Theological Lyceum in Timisoara/Temesvár to be established. The recent Supreme Court decision clearly discriminates against Hungarians since there have been no legal challenges against the Romanian-language school.*

Timeline of Official Actions Obstructing Possession of the Property by the Church

The Roman Catholic Theological Lyceum in Târgu Mureş was **founded in 1702** by the Roman Catholic Jesuit Order as an elementary school, later functioning as a high school. It has been build and operated by the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1948, the school was shut down by the communist regime and its buildings were confiscated and nationalised. A state-run Hungarian Girls' School moved into the main building. From 1962 the school operated under the name Unirea High School with Romanian and Hungarian parallel classes.

In 2004, implementing the law on church property restitution, the buildings were restituted on paper to the Roman Catholic Church. The Church was not able to take possession of the building, however, since it served public education purposes, due to a loophole in the law, though the clear intent of the Church has been that the building will host a public education institution, but under the auspices of the Church.

In 2013, the idea to re-establish the Roman Catholic Theological Lyceum was born and approved by the Târgu Mureş municipal council in November 2014. In the 2014-2015 academic year, the first Catholic theological classes of the school were held, but in another building, the Bolyai Farkas High School, a Hungarian language institution.

In August 2015, the county level Inspectorate of Education authorized the reconstituted Hungarian Roman Catholic Theological Lyceum, now bearing the name of Ferenc Rákóczi II. It moved into its rightful building, integrating the Unirea public school's Hungarian classes, and allowing the now only Romanian teaching Unirea Public High School to remain. Understandably, the shortage of classrooms caused friction between the schools.

Meanwhile, the Mures County Prefect (the government representative at the county level) challenged the 2015 decision of the Inspectorate of Education which authorized the Roman Catholic Theological Lyceum. The National Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (DNA) also started investigating the case, initiating proceedings against the Inspector General of Education and the school director. There was no evidence of alleged wrong doings, but as a result of a series of lawsuits filed by Romanian nationalist organisations, the school was dissolved by the local court **in August 2017**. The Hungarian classes were reassigned to the above-mentioned Bolyai Farkas High School.

In 2018, a Hungarian–Romanian bilateral government agreement was reached on the school, and a ministerial decree in August allowed the school to be re-established. The decision was again challenged by Romanian extremist NGOs, resulting in the annulment of the decision **in November 2019** by the Târgu Mureş court.

Almost three years later, **in May 2022** the Bucharest Supreme Court upheld the lower court's decision. The future of the school remains uncertain.

The decision is a clear case of discrimination against Hungarians: the ministerial decree from 2018 also established a Romanian Orthodox Theological Lyceum in the Southwestern city of Timisoara. Not only were no proceedings brought against this institute, but even a summons to court was refused.