

THE RESULTS OF THE LOCAL ELECTIONS IN HARGHITA COUNTY, 5TH JUNE 2016

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Abstract: The article intends to present the territorial distribution of the people's electoral choices at the 2016 Local Elections. Based on the official statistical data from the Central Electoral Bureau, we analysed the electoral decisions for mayors, local and county councillors. In Harghita, the people elected 67 mayors, with the following affiliations: DUHR (47), SDP (7), HCP (5), independents (5), the HCP-HPPT (2), and NLP (1). Out of the 837 local council seats most went to DUHR (530), followed by HCP (77), HPPT (68), SDP (53), NLP and the HCP-HPPT alliance with 33 mandates each, IC (24), LDEP (8), NDP and POL (2 mandates each), while GRP, GP, HPP-LS, CDNPP, PMP, RP-PE, DARP won one seat each. Harghita County Council is currently comprised of 30 councillors (18 DUHR representatives, 4 HCP, 3 SDP, 3 HPPT, and 2 NLP) and its president (Borboly Csaba), member of the DUHR.

Keywords: mayors, local councillors, county councillors, DUHR

1. Introduction

In the last decades, Romanian geographic research focused on studies regarding the population electoral behaviour. Following said trend, the geographic school of Cluj-Napoca created three doctoral theses based on this theme, one of which focusing inclusively on the County of Harghita (*Etnie, confesiune and comportament electoral în Transilvania. Studiu geografic*, V. Bodocan, 2001). Furthermore, for our endeavour, we used as models papers written by V. Bodocan (1997); Gr. P. Pop & V. Bodocan (2009); G. B. Tofan (2013); G. B. Tofan & Cristina Timariu (2014); G. B. Tofan (2014), as well as a postdoctoral research project (*Etnie, confesiune and comportament electoral în județele Harghita, Covasna and Mureş. Studiu geografic (2008-2014)*, G. B. Tofan, 2015).

The 21st Electoral Precinct – Harghita County is comprised of 67 smaller electoral precincts, with 290 voting stations (18 stations more than in 2012). The county saw a number of 2 648 full candidacies for mayor, county and local councillor (463 being women).

For the 2016-2020 mayoral mandate, there were 153 de candidates (145 men and 8 women), for the local councils 2 271 (1 859 men and 412 women), while, for county councillors, there were 224 candidacies (181 men and 43 women). As for the age groups of the candidates, most fit in the 40-50 year age group (890 people, out of which 734 men and 156 women), followed by the 30-40

age group (757 people, out of which 612 men and 145 women), the 50-60 year group (483, out of which 411 M and 72 F), 60-70 year group - 247 people (214 M and 33 F), 20-30 year group - 245 (190 M and 55 F), 70-80 year group, with 25 candidates (23 M and 2 F), and lastly one male candidate from the 10-20 year group (19 years of age).

Moreover, 23 of the 58 communes in the county had only one candidate for the position of mayor. These communes were: Atid, Avrămeşti, Brădeşti, Cârţa, Ciucsîngeorgiu, Dăneşti, Dârjiu, Dealu, Ditrău, Leliceni, Lupeni, Mereşti, Ocland, Porumbeni, Remetea, Sâncrăieni, Sânmartin, Sântimbru, Satu Mare, Siculeni, Tomeşti, Ulieş, and Zetea (table 2).

2. Methodology

Based on the official statistical data obtained from the Central Electoral Bureau, we created a table comprised of the following indicators for each administrative-territorial unit: *total number of people with right to vote; total number of valid votes; name and surname of candidate who won the mayor seat; political affiliation of said candidate; number and percentage of valid votes obtained by candidate*, as well as the *number of voting stations*. Following data editing and interpretation, we designed a map containing the territorial distribution of mayors for the 67 administrative-territorial units that make up Harghita County, according to their political affiliation.

The novel element of these elections is the fact that the president of the county council was no longer elected by popular vote, but was designated through an indirect vote, from the ranks of the county councillors. Moreover, a few months prior to these elections, attempts were made to alter the Electoral Code in order to return to two voting rounds instead of just one, but these requests were not validated by the Romanian Constitutional Court.

For a full understanding of the geographical-political aspects, we also went through several documents issued by the *Permanent Electoral Authority* regarding the organisation and development of these elections. Therefore, according to Government's Decision nr. 51/2016, the local elections took place on Sunday, 5th June 2016. In a similar fashion to 2012, for each candidate, the political parties and the independents candidates submitted a list containing at least 100 supporters in the case of communes, at least 500 signatures in the case of tier II and III urban settlements and at least 1 000 for counties, the Municipality of Bucureşti, the sectors of Bucureşti, and tier I cities.

Mayors would also be elected using the single round method (with the exception of equal scores), the only difference being that county council presidents were not elected by directly the population, but were elected by secret vote from the ranks of the county councillors.

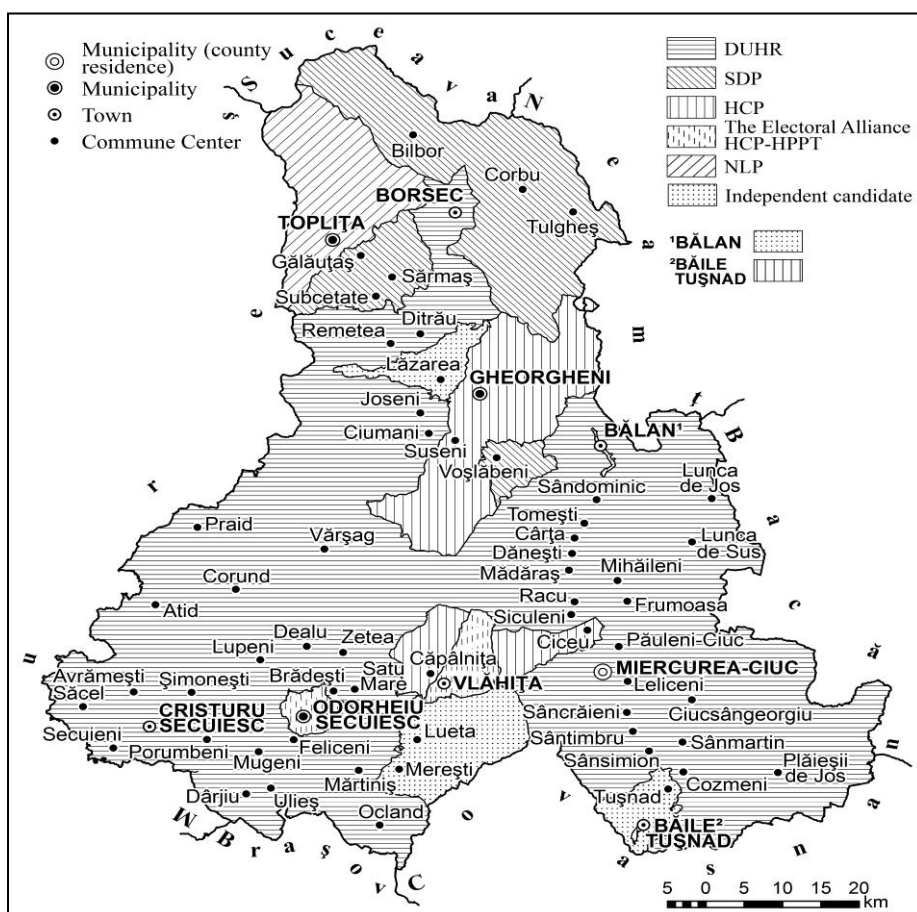
In 2016, the Permanent Electoral Authority began implementing *The Voter Turnout and Illegal Vote Prevention Informational System*, which enables voter identification data processing, signalling multiple and thus illegal voting, as well as the possibility to view voter turnout on-line and in real time.

3. Mayor and local councillor distribution, based on political affiliation

According to the official results provided by the Central Electoral Bureau, from its online data bank (<http://www.2016bec.ro/rezultate>), Harghita County registered a lower turnout than the national average (48.27%), meaning that, at 9 p.m., voter turnout reached 43.48% of the total number of voters – 270 485 (38.19% in urban areas and 47.85% in rural areas). Therefore, this territorial unit, alongside Timiș, Iasi, Covasna, and Sibiu, had one of the lowest turnouts in the entire country.

The total number of valid votes for mayor was 114 231, *the HCP-HPPT electoral alliance* obtaining 7 884 votes (6.90% in the precinct and 2.98% of mandates), *the Hungarian People's Party of Transilvania*, 5 460 votes (4.77%), *Liberal and Democrat Party Alliance*, 233 votes (0.20%), *Hungarian Civic Party*, 10 003 votes (8.75% and 7.46% of the mandates), *People's Movement Party*, 159 votes (0.13%), *National Democratic Party*, 199 votes (0.17%), *National Liberal Party*, 5 170 votes (4.52% and 1.5% of the mandates), *Free People's Party*, 801 votes (0.70%), *Humanist Power Party (Social-Liberal)*, 132 votes (0.11%), *Greater Romania Party*, 119 votes (0.10%), *Social Democratic Party*, 7 091 votes (6.2% and 10.45% of the mandates), *the Green Party*, 129 votes (0.11%), *Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania*, 60 741 votes (53.17% and 70.15% of the mandates), and independent candidates – 16 110 votes (14.1% and 7.46% of mandates).

Fig. 1. Territorial distribution of mayors, based on political affiliation, in Harghita County, at the 2016 local elections.



The high concentration of Hungarian ethnics in the county (85.2%, 257 707 out of 302 435 inhabitants, according to the 2011 Census) led to large portion of the mandate pool to be won by DUHR. Thus, as one can see in table 1 as well as in figure 1, the Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania won 47 mayor seats (70.15%), SDP seven (10.45%), independent candidates and the Hungarian Civic Party five each (7.46%), the HCP-HPPT alliance two (2.98%), while the

National Liberal Party one (1.5%).

Three urban areas were won by DUHR: Miercurea-Ciuc (65.87%, 11687 total votes), Borsec (77.42%, 1 258), and Cristuru Secuiesc (61.47%, 3 320); two by HCP: Gheorgheni (83.01%, 5 564 total votes), and Băile Tuşnad (65.75%, 657); two other mandates by the HCP-HPPT alliance: Odorheiu Secuiesc (42.13%, 13 229) and Vlăhiţa (51.49%, 3 152), while in Topliţa, with a Romanian majority, the mayor's seat was won by the NLP representative, *Platon Stelu*, with 60.36% of the votes (2 892 votes) out of a total of 4791 votes.

The independent candidate *Iojiban Gheorghe* won the town of Bălan, with 43.68% (906 votes) out of 2 074 votes.

In rural areas, out of a total of 58 rural communes, DUHR again obtained the highest number of seats (44), followed by SDP with seven, won in communes with a strong Romanian presence (Bilbor, Corbu, Tulgheş, Gălăuţaş, Sărmaş, Subcetate, and Voşlăbeni), independent candidates four (Lăzarea, Tuşnad, Lueta and Mereşti), and HCP with three (Căpâlniţa, Ciceu, and Suseni).

Compared to 2012, the SDP won more seats (+ 5), in Corbu, Tulgheş, Gălăuţaş, Sărmaş, and Subcetate, but one must take into consideration that, during the last elections, this party was part of the Social Democratic Union, a political alliance comprised of the *Center-Left Alliance*: National Union for the Progress of Romania and Social Democratic Party, and the *Center-Right Alliance*: National Liberal Party and Conservative Party. In two municipalities (Bilbor and Gălăuţaş), each party of the above mentioned alliance supported their own candidate, while in Topliţa, Subcetate, and Voşlăbeni there were SLU candidates. HCP also performed better than in 2012 (+1), while the DUHR-HPPT alliance won two additional seats. Division among the Hungarian population led to fewer seats won by the DUHR (-4), and by independents (-1).

Table 1. Valid votes and mandates at the 2016 local elections, Harghita County

Party	Votes		Seats	%
	Nr.	% in the county		
DUHR	60741	53.17	47	70.15
IC	16110	14.10	5 (Lăzarea, Tuşnad, Bălan, Lueta, Mereşti)	7.46
HCP	10003	8.75	5 (Gheorgheni, Băile Tuşnad, Căpâlniţa, Ciceu, Suseni)	7.46
HCP-HPPT	7884	6.90	2 (Odorheiu Secuiesc, Vlăhiţa)	2.98
SDP	7091	6.20	7 (Bilbor, Corbu, Tulgheş, Gălăuţaş, Sărmaş, Subcetate, Voşlăbeni)	10.45
NLP	5170	4.52	1 (Topliţa)	1.50
Total	106999	93.64	67	100,0

Source: processed data from the Central Electoral Bureau.

DUHR = Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania; **IC** = Independent candidate; **HCP** = Hungarian Civic Party; **HCP-PPMT electoral alliance** = the electoral alliance between the Hungarian Civic Party and the Hungarian People's Party of Transilvania; **SDP** = Social Democratic Party; **NLP** = National Liberal Party;

In terms of local councillors, in Harghita, out of a total of 2 271 candidates, 837 were elected (two more seats compared to 2012), the total number of valid votes being 111 448.

Most seats were won by the Hungarian Democratic Union, 530 (63.32%), followed by HCP - 77 seats (9.20%), Hungarian People's Party of Transilvania - 68 (8.12%), SDP - 53 (6.33%), NLP - 33 (3.94%), DUHR-PPMT alliance - 33 seats (3.94%), 24 seats were won by independents (2.86%), Liberal and Democrat Alliance Party - 8 seats (0.95%), Free People's Party and the National Democratic Party with two seats each (0.23%). One seat was won by each of the following political organisations: „Pro Europa” Gypsy Party, Gypsy Democratic Alliance Party, People's Movement Party, National Christian Democratic Party, Greater Romania Party, Humanist Power Party (Social-Liberal), and the Green Party.

4. Electoral behaviour in county councillor voting

There were 224 candidates for county councillor seats (181 men and 43 women), but only 31 seats, the number of valid votes being 109 815. The results were as follows: DUHR - 19 seats (61.29%), HCP - 4 seats (12.90%), SDP and HPPT - 3 seats each (9.67%), and NLP - 2 seats (6.45%). The validation meeting for the new county council was held on 23rd June 2016.

Table 2. Mayor voting in Harghita County, Romania, 5th June 2016

No. crt.	City, town, commune	Total number of voters	Total no. of valid votes	Name of candidate	Political affiliation	Valid votes	%	Number of voting stations
1	Miercurea-Ciuc	34900	11687	Ráduly Róbert-Kálmán	DUHR	7699	65.87	23
2	Gheorgheni	16640	5564	Nagy Zoltán	HCP	4619	83.01	10
3	Toplița	13209	4791	Platon Stelu	NLP	2892	60.36	11
4	Odorheiu-Secuiesc	31831	13229	Gálfi Árpád	HCP-HPPT	5574	42.13	22
5	Băile Tușnad	1390	657	Albert Tibor	HCP	432	65.75	1
6	Bălan	6623	2074	Iojiban Gheorghe	IC	906	43.68	5
7	Borsec	2326	1258	Mik Jozsef	DUHR	974	77.42	2
8	Cristuru-Secuiesc	8922	3320	Rafai Emil	DUHR	2041	61.47	7
9	Vlăhița	6148	3152	Molnár Tibor	DUHR-HPPT	1623	51.49	5
10	Atid	2201	521	Szócs László	DUHR	521	100.00	5
11	Avrămești	2157	606	Simó Dezső-Szabolcs	DUHR	606	100.00	4

12	Bilbor	2274	1238	Trif Ilie	SDP	647	52.26	2
13	Brădeşti	1611	767	Bokor Botond	DUHR	767	100.00	2
14	Căpâlnița	1621	968	Benedek László	DUHR	685	70.76	2
15	Cârța	2289	787	Gábor Tibor	DUHR	787	100.00	2
16	Ciceu	2251	1310	Péter Lukács	DUHR	596	45.49	2
17	Ciucsîngeorgiu	3839	1164	György József	DUHR	1164	100.00	7
18	Ciumani	3692	1883	Márton László-Szilárd	DUHR	1239	65.79	3
19	Corbu	1166	730	Țepeș-Focșa Romeo	SDP	413	56.57	2
20	Corund	4921	2525	Katona Mihály	DUHR	1939	76.79	6
21	Cozmeni	1628	948	Szántó László	DUHR	775	81.75	2
22	Dănești	1865	820	Bőjte Csongor-Ernő	DUHR	820	100.00	2
23	Dârjiu	832	399	Istvan Adrian	DUHR	399	100.00	2
24	Dealu	3173	1019	Bálint Elemér-Imre	DUHR	1019	100.00	3
25	Ditrău	4863	1428	Puskás Elemér	DUHR	1428	100.00	5
26	Felíceni	2680	1592	Sándor Jozsef	DUHR	905	56.84	6
27	Frumoasa	2964	1142	Ferencz Tibor	DUHR	916	80.21	3
28	Gălăuțaș	2045	985	Țaran Radu	SDP	637	64.67	3
29	Joseni	4822	2006	Gáll Szabolcs	DUHR	1688	84.14	4
30	Lăzarea	2949	1590	Danguly Ervin	IC	941	59.18	3
31	Lelíceni	1637	587	Keresztes Balázs	DUHR	587	100.00	3
32	Lueta	3061	1180	Mihály Dénes	IC	614	52.03	2
33	Lunca de Jos	4274	1890	Gergely Karoly	DUHR	1246	65.92	5
34	Lunca de Sus	2701	1317	Pap Imre	DUHR	707	53.68	4
35	Lupeni	3750	1972	Kovács Lehel	DUHR	1972	100.00	6
36	Mădăraș	1805	1082	Biró László	DUHR	645	59.61	2
37	Mărtiniș	2361	1438	Jakab Attila	DUHR	649	45.13	10
38	Merești	1121	362	Tikosy László	IC	362	100.00	1
39	Mihăileni	2208	1124	Izsák-Székely Lóránt	DUHR	645	57.38	4
40	Mugeni	2870	1587	Farkas Mozes	DUHR	1281	80.71	8
41	Ocland	1005	367	Cseke Miklós	DUHR	367	100.00	2
42	Păuleni-Ciuc	1509	750	Ferencz Csaba	DUHR	447	59.60	3
43	Plăieșii de Jos	2119	1056	András Zoltán	DUHR	791	74.90	4
44	Porumbeni	1397	787	Gyerkó Levente	DUHR	787	100.00	2
45	Praid	5491	2854	Bokor Alexandru	DUHR	1501	52.59	5
46	Racu	1294	723	Császár Attila	DUHR	581	80.35	2
47	Remetea	5152	3137	Laczkó-Albert Elemér	DUHR	3137	100.00	4
48	Săcel	952	475	Nagy Lajos	DUHR	328	69.05	4
49	Sâncrăieni	2082	854	Székely Ernő	DUHR	854	100.00	2
50	Săndominic	5232	2086	Karda Róbert	DUHR	1749	83.84	4
51	Sânmartin	1830	598	Gergely András	DUHR	598	100.00	2
52	Sânsimion	2742	1623	Kozma Istvan-Florin	DUHR	1063	65.49	3
53	Sântimbru	1686	779	Kencse Előd	DUHR	779	100.00	2
54	Sârmaș	3341	1585	Mândru Valentin	SDP	1154	72.80	4
55	Satu Mare	1613	604	Kovács Imre	DUHR	604	100.00	2
56	Secuieni	2236	976	Balló Zoltán	DUHR	537	55.02	3
57	Siculeni	2306	991	Szentes Csaba	DUHR	991	100.00	2
58	Șimonești	3105	1578	Péter Zoltán	DUHR	1139	72.11	8
59	Subcetate	1542	841	Rizea Ion	SDP	247	29.36	1
60	Suseni	4271	1964	Egyed József	DUHR	784	39.91	6
61	Tomești	2172	670	Kedves Róbert	DUHR	670	100.00	2
62	Tulgheș	2655	1508	Vancu Marcel	SDP	1333	88.39	4
63	Tușnad	1723	1040	György József	IC	633	60.86	3
64	Ulieș	911	265	György Sándor	DUHR	265	100.00	5
65	Vârșag	1301	735	Tamás Ernő	DUHR	572	77.82	2

66	Voşlăbeni	1662	998	Tinca Mihail-Dumitru	SDP	580	58.11	2
67	Zetea	4785	1688	Nagy Attila	DUHR	1688	100.00	6

Source: Central Electoral Bureau.

DUHR = Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania; **HCP** = Hungarian Civic Party; **HCP-HPPT electoral alliance** = the electoral alliance between Hungarian Civic Party and Hungarian People's Party of Transilvania; **NLP** = National Liberal Party; **SDP** = Social Democratic Party; **IC** = Independent candidate.

The president of Harghita County Council is currently held by *Borboly Csaba*, now in his third term, and the vicepresidents are *Barti Tihamér* and *Biró Barna Botond*, the entire council presidential structure being comprised of DUHR representatives.

5. Conclusions

Romanians are a majority in most areas of Romania, but the situation in Harghita County is rather peculiar, as Romanians are only a minority. For instance, in 2011, they numbered solely 13.0% (39 196 people). From an electoral standpoint, this means that the most important political party is the Democratic Union of Hungarians, who won absolute majority on all levels of the local administration, with 19 county councillor seats (61.29%), 530 local councillor seats (63.32%), and 47 mayor seats (70.15%). In the areas with a Romanian majority located in the northern part of the county, SDP representatives obtained 7 mayor seats, 53 seats in local councils and three in the county council, while NLP obtained one mayor seat, in Toplița, 33 seats in local councils and only two in the county council.

Another important aspect involves voter turnout. At the local elections held on 5th June 2016, at 9 p.m., Harghita County placed last in terms of voter turnout in rural areas (47.85%) and 39 (43.48%) in urban areas, ahead of Iași and Timiș counties, and the Municipality of București.

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