

## HungEduNews 20-26. 11. 2021

26-11-2021 Librarius

The heirs of Dezső Tandori and his wife have donated more than 6,400 volumes from the couple's library to the Apor Vilmos Catholic College, on condition that the collection remains intact and available for research. The bequeath is open to the public by appointment while the catalogue is in preparation.

26-11-2021 Válasz online

The number of secret private funds in Hungary has already risen to 78, and 55 of them are managed by the stooges of Fidesz oligarchs. The identity of the actual owners and the origin of the money "laundered" into the funds is unknown, so they may remain hidden from the authorities if they are involved in illegal transactions with each other. According to the paper, private equity funds have established themselves in 12 sectors in recent months. One of these is the university sector: the Budapest Metropolitan University was supposed to have been transferred from Chinese hands to the MNB's foundation interest in late summer, but its maintainer, Közép-Európa Alfa Vagyonkezelő Kft., ended up as a private equity fund (Közép-Európai III.) managed by a private entity, namely Quartz Investment Fund Management, which is linked to the son of the central bank president and his friend István Száraz.

26-11-2021 Mércse

What will happen to the abominable Labour Code? What ministries will be set up if the opposition happens to win? What will console university citizens who have lost the autonomy of their institutions? What immediate social measures will be taken? What will happen to the secret services? What are you offering our fellow Roma citizens? Finally, will the tax system be single-rate or multi-rate? What will happen to the expansion of Paks? Will the public works scheme entrenching poverty, be abolished? What will happen to public media? – According to the paper, these and similar questions are the ones that the opposition should be addressing with just over four months to go before the elections, but in the 40 days since the primaries, the opposition is silent and invisible.

26-11-2021 Telex

In a report from Transparency International Hungary's 2021 Investigative Journalism Mentoring Program, we learn how the Cabinet Office of Prime Minister Antal Rogán is using public money to finance government propaganda, and how these billions cease to be public money as they make their way through the government-funded Batthyány Lajos Foundation (BLA) as the main sponsor to the beneficiary pseudo-civil society organizations and their potential further supporters. The beneficiaries often remain debtors with itemised accounts, so the public is not informed about who they have supported, what "scientific (research and analytical) activities" they have commissioned and what related services they have spent our tax money on. One of the main actors in this well-established and effective network for manipulating public opinion and determining public discourse is the Centre for Fundamental Rights (which fights for the preservation of "national identity and sovereignty and Christian social traditions"), owned by the non-profit Law State and Justice Ltd. Since its registration in 2013, the Centre has received at least HUF 2.5 billion in public funding. The "at least" is because over the years it has received increasing amounts of funding from undisclosed sources, and this year's grants are expected to be larger than ever before. No response to the newspaper's request for public data. The Centre, employing 40 people, is engaged in research, expertise, analysis, the organisation of conservative international conferences, "film, video and television

production", among other things. The project is led by Miklós Szánthó, who is also Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Central European Press and Media Foundation (KESMA). The BLA, as the authors have learned through a public data request, received a total of at least HUF 11.3 billion between 2018 and 2020, of which HUF 6.2 billion was redistributed to at least 56 organisations in addition to the Centre for Fundamental Rights. At the end of 2020, the BLA was also transformed into a public interest trust and received a HUF 10 billion capital contribution, including a headquarters building in Buda Castle. Chairman of the Board of Trustees is Tamás Dezső, former Dean of the ELTE Faculty of Humanities, Head of the Migration Research Institute. The article also mentions the other main player in the propaganda machine, the Megafon Digital Incubator Centre Nonprofit Ltd. With 16 employees.

26-11-2021 Telex

After the man who attacked a woman with a knife on a bus in Csepel in February this year for wearing a FreeSZFE mask in solidarity with students and former lecturers of the University of Theatre and Film Arts was on appeal sentenced to five years in prison, the 38-year-old man complained to Blikk that he had suffered many atrocities in prison.

25-11-2021 G7

"I was abused by my fellow inmates, and once my cellmate hit me so hard that the cartilage in my left ear was broken and my eardrum torn, I can barely hear out of this ear," he told the paper. His defence lawyer, Tamás Gaudi-Nagy, also said that they would file a motion for reconsideration with an extraordinary ruling and ask the Curia to change the verdict. They would like to see an acquittal, or at least a change in the wrong classifications, because the lawyer said the man had only committed negligent light assault, which is not a crime. In addition, the wearing of the FreeSZFE mask is an expression of opinion and therefore does not constitute membership of a group protected by law, which would be at risk of exclusion and would be a priority for criminal protection.

25-11-2021 Magyar Hang

On Wednesday evening, the Gábor Karátson Circle organised the last debate of the series "What will the future be like?" on education, with the participation of philosopher András Lányi, rector Zoltán Gloviczki (Apor Vilmos Catholic College), Mária Kerényi, director of the Lyceum and others. "The quality of Hungarian public education as a whole today is more inadequate than it was half a century ago," says the invitation to the event. Gloviczki says the system is on the verge of collapse, but he sees this as an opportunity for transformation.

25 11 2021 Magyar Narancs (weekly newspaper, pages 11-13)

According to Géza Bodolay, director of the National Theatre History Museum and Institute (OSZMI) and the Gizi Bajor Actors' Museum (Bajor Gizi Színészmúzeum), the government has decided that the museum will be part of the SZFE Foundation (Foundation for Theatre and Film Art, SZFA), not only in terms of assets but also in terms of organisation. According to him, when the new building complex of the SZFE will be erected, the OSZMI could also move there. The only organisation that has so far objected to the expropriation of the OSZMI is the Hungarian Theatre Society, which says that the properties in question were owned not only by the state but by the entire theatre profession, and that their outsourcing as foundation property is a "historical crime".

25-11-2021 G7

According to education researcher Kriszta Ercse, after two years, no other country's education administration is still as unprepared for the epidemic as Hungary's. The author, with ample

documentation of her claims, reviews the measures taken during the pandemic from March 2020 to the present day, and then compares the WHO's eight-point recommendations for safe schooling conditions (e.g. whole-school testing, contact research; providing access to online education, supporting parents to stay at home if necessary; providing physical education for disadvantaged children; vaccinating teachers, etc.) with the Hungarian government's handling of the epidemic and concludes: our schools are in the grip of an epidemic, the government has allowed the situation to get completely out of hand. Finally, he asks: 'if our educational administration in a pandemic was not able to deal with prevention and protection [...], [...] did not provide professional support, nor did it see the possibilities in this terrible situation, are we sure that the right people are in the right place?'

25-11-2021 ATV

Most universities have hybrid teaching, with the heads of individual faculties deciding on the precautions to be taken. ELTE already has data on vaccination rates. These numbers are so high that Deputy Rector Lénárd Darázs says sanctions against the unvaccinated would not cause operational disruption.

25-11-2021 Magyar Narancs

On 12 December, the Freeszfe Association will hold a charity auction to finance diploma films and exam performances. The association's 170 students are being taught for free by more than 100 instructors. "The money currently available in our account will ensure the continuation of the work and training courses started last year until March," they said in a statement. Among the items and undertakings offered for auction are a number of manuscripts, props, relics, photographs, cultural and educational programmes, etc. To register, click on the link in the article [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScZD5V9cGz886yOBRDZHesBWAHjSMjfRPAI41F-RjDKme1\\_VA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScZD5V9cGz886yOBRDZHesBWAHjSMjfRPAI41F-RjDKme1_VA/viewform) or donate on the website <https://www.freeszfe.hu/>

25-11-2021 Népszava

In a recent interview, László Pósn, Fidesz MP and chairman of the Culture Committee, said that it is time to reconsider whether it makes sense that teachers in public education are currently employed as public servants, while those in vocational education are now employed under the Labour Code. In this context, Népszava repeatedly asked the Ministry of Human Resources whether they were really thinking of abolishing the status of teachers in the schools of the school districts as public employees, but they received no answer. Ágnes Kunhalmi (Hungarian Socialist Party MEP), vice-chair of the culture committee, also asked about this at Miklós Kásler's hearing on 16 November, but it was neither confirmed nor denied. According to her and Tamás Totyik, vice-president of the Teachers' Trade Union, it is no coincidence that the government has promised a major pay rise only from 2023 (after the 2022 elections), and that the price of this would be that teachers, like vocational teachers, would be exempted from the Public Employees Act.

25-11-2021 24hu

Independent MEP Szabolcs Szabó asked Minister Kásler whether he considers Szilárd Demeter's mandate as culture reformer acceptable after the astonishing interview he gave. State Secretary Rétvári replied that there is freedom of expression in Hungary and that the MEP should respect Demeter's opinion if he expects his to be respected.

24-11-2021 Mércse

The Carpathian Basin Folk Art School would get two properties in Lake Venice for free, under Zsolt Semjén's salad bill submitted last night. The patrons of the folk high school, which is

maintained by a public interest trust ("kekva"), are László L. Simon, Sándor Lezsák and Zoltán Tessely, Fidesz MPs, as well as a deputy state secretary of the Ministry of Education and the director of the National Institute of Culture. The purpose of the donation is to support the educational, training and higher education activities of the People's College. The proposal caught the eye of Olivió Kocsis-Cake, a member of the Parliament for Dialogue, along with the fact that the Óbuda University Foundation had previously received the most desirable plots of land on the banks of the Danube (Rómaipart) in Budapest for similar reasons.

#### 24-11-2021 HVG

Last night, the government submitted a bill to extend the state of emergency due to the epidemic. As part of the bill, students who pass their final exams between 1 September 2020 and 31 August 2021 would be able to graduate without taking a language exam.

#### 24-11-2021 K-Monitor

This blog post reviews how public interest trusts, as organisations with a public function, are fulfilling their disclosure obligations in terms of making public data and information available to the public. The result is that in most cases there is no disclosure, and where there is, there is a lack of disclosure, despite the fact that these are organisations managing tens of billions of dollars in assets each. The author notes that the legal requirements are not entirely clear either, given the 'innovative' form of foundations.

#### 24-11-2021 444

Next year, a master's degree in aerospace engineering will start at the BME.

#### 23-11-2021 Free Europe

Andrea Pető, Professor of History (CEU), has written a letter in response to Valéria Csépe, Academician and President of the Hungarian Accreditation Board (MAB), who earlier called on her to retract a statement in her forthcoming article *Illiberal Academic Authorisation: An Oxymoron?* According to the incriminated claim, the European Quality Assurance for Higher Education (ENQA) should have taken into account the role of the MAB in the abolition of gender studies before accrediting the MAB, but was caught completely unprepared by the confrontation with the illiberal state's policies on higher education. In his letter of response, which can be read embedded in the article, Pető lists when and how the MAB has since then imposed political considerations at the expense of professional ones (in the case of the appointment of Fidesz MP László Pószán as a University Professor or the restructuring of Hungarian secondary school teacher training), and notes Csépe's responsibility for the loss of the body's professional reputation. "In my analysis of the history of dictatorships, I learned that one should not look for written instructions on what kind of submissive behaviour is expected by the establishment from the subjects. One cannot find written traces when an institution and the members running it become the servants of a dictatorship. Collaboration usually follows verbal hints and compliance with perceived or real expectations. I have been lucky enough to receive clear instructions in writing about institutional expectations which I cannot and will not, for reasons of professionalism and conscience, comply with," he concludes, announcing his resignation from the MAB.

#### 23-11-2021 Magyar Hang

The EU's public procurement gazette today revealed that the Public Foundation for Research on Central and Eastern European History and Society, led by loyalist Mária Schmidt, can spend an additional €700 million on a media campaign for the Trianon commemorative year, which was interrupted by the epidemic, and other communication purposes. [This foundation includes

the House of Terror, the 20th Century Institute, the 21st Century Institute, the Habsburg Institute, the Institute for the Study of Communism and the Imre Kertész Institute.] According to the rule, 70% of the 700 million, or nearly half a billion, must be spent for this purpose. Once again, the tender was won by the interests of the loyalist Gyula Balásy, as was the case with the 1956 and World War I commemorations. Last year, Schmidt's foundation received 2.9 billion forints for the same purpose, 630 million of which was spent on teacher training courses on the Trianon Peace Treaty in at least 3-star hotels, and 1 billion for a thematic travelling exhibition on the consequences of the Trianon decision in 18 county capitals (carefully avoiding Budapest) until September 2022. The remaining almost 1.3 billion cannot be traced.

22-11-2021 PrivátBankár

Anton Bendarjevskiy, Belarusian-born analyst living in Hungary and research director of the Danube Institute, said that the main base of the Belarusian opposition are Poland and Lithuania, where their media has moved to and even a university has moved to Vilnius. One of the precursors of the current conflict is the so-called Karta Polaka (Polish Card), which allowed people with Polish family ties to travel visa-free to Poland and study for free at universities. Since the events following the presidential elections last year, a large part of the intellectuals and students have fled to Poland or Lithuania.

22-11-2021 Átlátszó

On 5 November, "System level – National Community Organising Workshop" of the Civic College Foundation launched a national campaign for national priority investments (over 3,000 already!) (See 24h 24.11.2021). The article recalls the Castle Architects' Forum on 5 November, where János Róth, Associate Professor at the BME, said that the government has still not prepared a management plan for the preservation of the Budapest cityscape, as required by UNESCO, which would contain strict rules on the impact assessment of projects in World Heritage sites.

22-11-2021 HVG360

According to István Stumpf, the government commissioner responsible for model change, it is not true that the model changes were forced by the government, and if the SZFE scandal had not been a "deterrent", ELTE and BME might not have been left out of the process. In his view, the fear of autonomy has passed in the universities that have undergone model changes, and "all universities are satisfied". Asked about the necessity of restructuring (the state could have changed the rules and funding without it; the four-legged funding system could be introduced in public universities in Austria), he replied:

- 1) The disadvantages of state maintenance are i) that it does not allow free management, for example of residual funds, "because the budget has to be closed every year" and ii) that the public salary scale cannot be exceeded, although "we want to achieve that a university assistant earns at least 500,000 gross and a professor at least 1 million".
- 2) All previous attempts at funding reform "have been thwarted by university resistance".
- 3) The aim was to get the institutions "involved in the funding, to bring in money".

ELTE and BME are excluded from this funding system as it is now. In his view, all 21 universities have different governance structures, e. g. Miskolc has not lost the strong powers of the Senate, and in Szeged the composition of the Board of Trustees has "reassured the public". The fact that the members of the board of trustees are linked to the current government is nothing special: "obviously the government will not appoint people from the opposition, as they are against the change of model in the first place". Nor is it a problem if the trustees cannot be replaced, since this is "not a political career, nor is it an exercise of public power". He said that the government is spending an "unprecedented" amount of money on higher education,

"approximately 1700 billion" (including 500 billion for science parks), but from what source (EU, own budget) has not yet been decided.

22-11-2021 Magyar Hang

According to the newspaper, the diplomatic residence in Buda Castle, later the Burg Hotel, built between 1971 and 1981 on the basis of designs by György Jánossy and László Laczkovics, will soon be demolished. The building was purchased from the state (without competitive bidding) by the Pallas Athéné Domus Meriti Foundation (Domus Meriti), a foundation of György Matolcsy (Governor of the Hungarian National Bank), "in order to expand and disseminate its scientific, educational and research activities" (see 24hu 19/10/2021). The Hungarian Chamber of Architects is proposing that the building, which is of indisputable architectural value, should be placed under local protection, but the paper says that the profession is likely to resist in vain this time too, without impressing the government.

22-11-2021 HVG

The 11-week free evening courses of the Central European University's Socrates Programme will be attended by 40 students who have been denied the opportunity to continue their studies. The course does not lead to credits, only to a diploma. It was designed and delivered with the support of the Open Society University Network (OSUN), founded by CEU and Bard College, New York. OSUN aims to make the university accessible to a wider audience. In Vienna and Berlin, the programme will soon offer courses in Turkish and Serbo-Croatian. The 40 students in Budapest were selected from 100 applicants. For them, "the mere fact that they can take part in one of our courses, discuss readings, and find themselves in a new environment, gives them a lot," says Máté Halmos, the programme's organiser in Budapest.

22-11-2021 Átlátszó

The fact-checker online journal has sent a public-interest request to universities to find out how many of their lecturers are working below their qualification (and for a lower basic salary), i.e. how many assistant lecturers have a PhD less than three years old and how many lecturers with completed habilitation have a degree below associate professor. Most of the recipients replied within the 15-day deadline, two requested an extension, but the newly created SZFE Foundation said that it could only reply to the data request against payment of a fee, and set the labour costs at 46 hours, the fee for which was HUF 202 400. In addition, they added a delivery charge of HUF 1580, although they could have sent the data electronically, as the other universities did. The number of lecturers at the SZFE is 191 (this was provided free of charge in an earlier data request), while at ELTE and a number of other universities there are more than 1200, and they did not ask for a fee for providing the data.

22-11-2021 HVG360

The National Museum and Institute of Theatre History (OSZMI) will continue to operate as a non-profit foundation under the new Vidnyánszky Foundation for Theatre and Film Art. This foundation owns, in addition to SZFE and OSZMI, the Uránia Cinema in Pest and the one billion HUF Déryné Art Ltd. The two properties of the OSZMI, the classicist headquarters on Krisztina körút and the Bajor Gizi Villa in District XII, home to the Theatre Museum, are also owned by the new foundation. Its managing director is Géza Bodolay, the former director of OSZMI, who a year ago was appointed head of an SZFE institute.

22-11-2021 Népszava

The newspaper has obtained a 12-page letter from the European Commission's (EC) director-general for budget in which he requests information from the Hungarian government on some

suspected corruption cases involving EU funds. One such case is the outsourcing of universities to so-called public interest trusts (foundations). The ECJ is seeking clarification on whether public procurement rules cover public interest foundations and how the authorities intend to prevent conflicts of interest for their directors, who "may continue to receive substantial amounts of EU funding from European aid funds" while they are also run by government officials. This letter is not yet part of the rule of law procedure, but if the Hungarian side does not provide a satisfactory response to the serious concerns it raises within two months, the procedure to withdraw the money could begin.

22-11-2021. MÉRCE

According to a recent survey by Parents' Voice, the shortage of kindergarten teachers has reached critical proportions in Hungary, with the quality of kindergarten education being increasingly compromised by the inability to provide two qualified kindergarten teachers per class. The government legalized this emergency situation by decree in August 2020: before 8am and after 12pm, kindergartens can employ anyone without pedagogical qualifications, degrading these institutions into childcare, according to the organisation. There is a shortage of development teachers, physiotherapists, speech therapists and psychologists at least as great as there is a shortage of nursery teachers, so children with special needs are in a particularly difficult situation. Based on the survey, the organisation summarised the biggest problems facing nursery schools in Hungary in 8 points, the first of which being "humiliatingly low" salaries.

22-11-2021 Telex

Retired English teacher Viktor Jilly doesn't understand why the education government wants to get rid of teachers with decades of experience and professional knowledge when they reach retirement age, while there is no supply of young professionals. He believes that if the head of the EMMI (Ministry of Human Capacities), five years older than himself, can be entrusted with the entire health and education sector, he could be a suitable mentor for teacher candidates. He hopes the government will reconsider its 2012 decision on the principles of public sector pension policy and allow those who, like himself, do not want to "deprive themselves of the pleasure of teaching" after 40 years to continue in the profession.

22-11-2021 24hu

The body of László Klein, faculty member of the ELTE (Eötvös Loránd University) Institute of Psychology who disappeared on 28 October, was found in the Danube. Klein's research was focused on post-subcultural media, countercultural movements and the sociology of reading among deviants. The paper also quotes a news item on the PPK (ELTE Faculty of Education and Psychology) website.

21-11-2021 Free Europe

The trial in the case against the Memorial Human Rights Centre in Russia, threatened with closure, will take place on 25 November. (See: Népszava 12/11/2021.) In an interview, the president of the society, Alexander Cherkasov, said that they had been under pressure for a long time, but had tried to continue their work, but now "the iron fist has struck". For more than 30 years the Memorial Centre documented the crimes of the Soviet era and defended the right of Russians to a fair trial, but under Putin the state has gradually rehabilitated Stalin and his legacy.

#### 21-11-2021 Free Europe

All but two provinces in Afghanistan continue to close secondary schools (grades 7-12) to girls. Taliban authorities say they are committed to girls' education, but first need to work out how to bring it into line with Islamic law. Meanwhile, the Taliban government has stopped paying state employees because of the economic crisis. In a video on the portal, a young teacher says she has not been paid for four months.

#### 21-11-2021 MÉRCE

"My dear grandson, you are head of government. No excuses, it's up to you how much funding you provide" for education, according to a letter written by Máté Lakatos, a secondary school teacher, on behalf of Kunó Klebelsberg to Viktor Orbán after the prime minister claimed at the Fidesz congress over the weekend that his party "are mostly Klebelsberg's grandchildren". Lakatos recalls that under Klebelsberg's ministership, the ministry had more than 10% of the budget, teachers' flats were built, "a secondary school teacher earned 454 pengő, a university teacher 898 pengő and a kindergarten teacher in the capital 290 pengő", and teachers' compulsory hours were only 18 hours a week. "Be the prime minister of a government that does not abuse the vocation and commitment of those working in the field of education, but utilizes it," concludes the exhortation to Orbán, written as by Klebelsberg (Minister of Interior and of Culture 1922-1931).

#### 20-11-2021 Free Europe

Philosopher József Tillmann told the newspaper's podcast: he will not blindly obey and suck up to a university chancellor. In the interview with him, the content of his highly publicised letter (see 444, 08.11.2021) and the issue of the chancellorship system are discussed, as well as the "serious problem" of representative democracy.

#### 20-11-2021 Telex

A "salad law" plans to hand over more property free of charge to university foundations set up this year. The University of Óbuda is to receive large, contiguous plots of land on the banks of the River Danube (Római-part), and ownership of several of the few remaining state-owned boathouses will be transferred to the new foundation, after the state already handed over 13 properties on the banks of the River Danube to two universities in August: the University of Physical Education received four plots of land it had previously used, and nine were allocated to the University of Óbuda Foundation (whose board of trustees is chaired by Finance Minister Mihály Varga).