

Róbert KORMÁNYOS - János VIDA

Talent care in Voivodina

Presentation of the prominent talent support foundations, associations and other NGOs of Voivodina

1. Talent Support Council of Voivodina

The Talent Support Council of Voivodina (Hungarian: Vajdasági Tehetségsegítő Tanács; VaTT)¹ was founded in December 2010 at Zenta, on the initiative of seven Talent Points. The Council is a non-governmental organisation; its activities and objectives are driven by the *National Talent Programme*.

Its main objectives include talent support counselling, the creation of a uniform database of the mentors and the mentored persons; the organisation of professional further training and conferences for teachers teaching in Hungarian; contact-keeping and interest representation in relation to other domestic and foreign talent points and councils; the propagation of the Talent Programme in Serbia and co-operation with other nations and networking. The Council provides its members on-going opportunities for reconciling their positions at professional fora, for discussing issues pertaining to raising support funds, and for promoting and shaping the further development of talent support throughout Serbia by relaying information.

2. Bolyai Farkas Foundation for Talents Studying in Hungarian²

2.1. Antecedents; inception of the foundation,

It was in the summer of 2005, on the occasion of a reunion full of emotions and memories commemorating the 50th anniversary of their matura examination that the alumni of the *Hungarian Main Gymnasium* of Zenta bearing the name of Bolyai Farkas realised that the time has come to do something for the future generations. A foundation seemed the most suitable

¹ <http://geniuszportal.hu/taxonomy/term/61?q=node/3265>

² <http://www.bolyaifarkas.org.rs/>

solution for providing support to the youth. The intention of the founding members has crystallised during their discussions. Their main goal was to provide support to dedicated students with sufficient diligence and talent whose exemplary knowledge and actions can make them prominent members of our community.

The alumni have converted their ideas into practice on 11 September 2005 by setting up the foundation named after Bolyai Farkas, registered at Zenta³, Posta utca 18 through the co-operation of 77 private individuals and 9 legal persons.

It is no accident that the Foundation was named after Bolyai Farkas, since the spirit of the Bolyais has its traditions also in Délvidék, i.e. the “southern lands”. They go back to 1933, the date of the establishment of the Belgrade Society for Culture and Literature of the Students of Bolyai Farkas Hungarian University (*Bolyai Farkas Magyar Egyetemi Hallgatók Belgrádi Művelődési és Irodalmi Egyesülete*)⁴ which acted also as a student aid society. The funds generated by the cultural events organised by the Society were used for supporting poorer students.

2.2. Goals of the Foundation

In line with its statutes, the main goal of Bolyai Farkas Foundation is to identify talented children studying in Hungarian in Serbia and in particular in Voivodina, and to secure their education, further education and financial and humanitarian support.

The Foundation has the following functions:

- To preserve the intellectual legacy of Farkas Bolyai and his son, János, and to carry it on in the fields of scientific research and cultural activities.
- To provide financial and humanitarian aid to talented students, undergraduates studying in Hungarian.
- To provide complex support to the Zenta Bolyai Talent Support Gymnasium to achieve its goals.
- To provide complex support to Serbian educational institutions with Hungarian programmes.

³ Zenta is located in the northern part of Serbia and of the Autonomous Province of Voivodina, along the right bank of the river Tisza, at a distance of 42 km from the Serbian/Hungarian frontier.

⁴ GUBÁS Jenő, *Értelmiségünk Bölcsője. A belgrádi Magyar egyetemista egyesületek története* (The cradle of our intelligentsia. History of the Hungarian university societies of Belgrade), Zenta, Bolyai Farkas Alapítvány, 2009, 13-65.

2.3. The pro-talent programmes of the Foundation

It follows from the objectives of the Foundation that it has supported/supports many events. Let us mention six priority programmes of the organisation as best practices:

- talent identification and selection programme (core activity of the Foundation), focusing on children of pre-school/primary school age and organising contests and camps;
- further training and mentor programme for teachers;
- scientific events;
- scholarship programmes;
- publishing;
- operation as registered talent point since 2010.

2.3.1. Talent identification and selection programme

Bolyai Farkas Foundation organises and supports the finals of seven national qualification contests. It sponsors annual summer and winter talent support camps and meetings. This gives it an opportunity to identify and work with many children with outstanding abilities and to provide them personalised development. Here are some of the county- and national-level contests:

- In 2012, we organised the *Fekete Mihály mathematics contest*, the Serbian qualifying round of the International Hungarian Mathematics Competition, for the tenth time.
- We have also organised the Voivodian rounds of the *Neumann János IT Contest*, the *Curie Chemistry Memorial Competition* and *Curie Mathematics Contest*, and of the *Zrínyi Ilona* and the *Gordiusz Mathematics Competitions*, respectively.
- In 2012, we organised for the first time the *Mikes Mihály Natural Sciences Competition*.
- We organise most successful annual camps mainly for children interested in mathematics, information technology and the visual arts. The movie camp introduced the students to the tricks of film-making.
- *Chemistry Camp of the Carpathian Basin*, our specialised camp propagating science, of international renown, will be organised for the sixth time in 2013.

We offer a venue and an opportunity for Serbian and foreign art schools to present themselves, so the students of secondary visual arts schools have been able to meet and get to know each other's work since 2009.

Bolyai Farkas Foundation has organised the guided preparation of gifted Hungarian primary school pupils for the admission exams in mathematics, visual arts and languages (Hungarian, English, German) since 2006. Thanks to that, the children concerned are better prepared for the admission exam to talent support grammar schools where the language of tuition is Hungarian⁵. Let us mention here that 85% of the almost 600 primary school pupils involved in the programme active for six years passed the admission exam.

2.3.2. Further training and mentor programme for teachers

We have organised further training in basic talent support in 60 hours to 150 teachers and subject teachers on six occasions since 2007. We were assisted in organising the training and in experience transfer by the professionals of the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology of the famous Debrecen University: Erika Turmezeyné dr. Heller, dr. László Balogh dr. Ferenc Mező and Róbert Orosz. The quality presentations covered the definition of the aim of talent identification and of the talent concept; the establishment of the conditions of entry to the talent support programme, and the preparation of the draft for a test series; the specification of the selection model; talent guidance, and the implementation of talent support through creative workshop activities.

The Foundation launched its mentor programme in 2010, in order to provide support and assistance to teachers and other professionals, counsellors interested in talent support; 45 persons take part in the programme.

2.3.3. Scientific events

In response to the encouragement of the National Talent Support Council, the Foundation has organised *Talent Days* on four occasions since 2007. The first two were hosted by the *Nagy József Regional Creative Workshop* in Nagykanizsa. The presentations held at these two

⁵ Children may continue their studies in Hungarian provided that they pass a special admission examination at the Zenta Bolyai Talent Support Gymnasium (mathematics, visual arts), the Újvidék (Novi Sad) Bogdan Šuput Secondary School for Visual Arts (4-year visual arts programme), the Karlóca Gymnasium in philology and the Kosztolányi Dezső Talent Support Gymnasium of Szabadka.

professional meetings introduced the teachers, parents and professionals interested in the topics of talent development and support to the significance of this topic. We have also compiled a publication comprising the conference presentations and papers and studies on the topic⁶. On the last two occasions, the talent day conference and professional days were held in Zenta, with the participation of several domestic and foreign lecturers. We have invited two renowned professionals of this subject matter, dr. Franz Josef Mönks and Professor dr. László Balogh.

The students presenting themselves at the talent days live in diverse areas of Voivodina. Their talent makes them excellent students of their schools, but they have also achieved significant results at national and international contests.

2.3.4. Scholarship programmes

In 2010 and 2012, the Foundation administered the tender entitled *Ady Endre scholarship to support highly gifted and socially underprivileged students studying in Hungarian abroad*. The data of some 1250 applicants were processed and 176 children were granted scholarship. On the first occasion, i.e. in the school-year of 2010/2011, we extended the Ady Endre scholarship based on the request of the *Public Foundation for Education*⁷.

As a sign of trust, Bolyai Farkas Foundation has since 2008 extended annual scholarships to two talented Voivodian students. The scholarship base of EUR 50 000 was donated by Ms Irene Bretschneider, born in Topolya and living in Germany now⁸. Students in need can be awarded the scholarship by application. It is announced once a year, in the last months of the year, in the Voivodian Hungarian press and also on our website⁹.

Primary criteria of awarding the scholarship:

⁶ VARJÚ POTREBIĆ Tatjana, VIDA János, *A Tehetségek Szolgálatában. I. Nemzetközi Tehetséggondozó Konferencia* (At the service of the talented. First International Talent Support Conference), Magyarakanizsa, Bolyai Farkas Alapítvány, 2009.

⁷ The Budapest-based public foundation supported pedagogical innovation, the bridging training of children with learning arrears, talent support at student boarding houses, the development of the technical infrastructure there, projects of institutions of education participating in vocational education and training, the assets developments of art schools. It has taken part in the National Talent Programme since 2009. Pursuant to a government resolution of 2011, the Public Foundation for Education was terminated. Consequently, the tasks of its Talent Support Sub-Board of Trustees are fulfilled by the Institute for Educational Research and Development, and the other tasks of the Public Foundation by the Wekerle Sándor Fund Manager.

⁸ Bretschneider Irén (née: Irén Tóth Isaszegi) is a retired architect living in Germany, born in Topolya (Voivodina), who experienced with her family the difficult situation of ethnic Hungarians. This is the reason why she thought of supporting talented, diligent, nationally-minded and religious students whose social situation made their further education very difficult. She wanted to help such youth remain in their home country after finishing their studies,.

⁹ <http://www.bolyaifarkas.org.rs/hu/isaszegi.html>

- eligible applicants are secondary school students or undergraduates of Serbian nationality, Hungarian as their mother tongue, with a permanent place of residence in Serbia (for secondary school students: if they study in Hungarian);
- - showing adequate study results;
- - outstanding achievements at contests or other study-related public events.

Secondary criteria:

- - social circumstances;
- - religious way of life;
- - other social work.

The applications are evaluated and the scholarships are granted by the three-strong scholarship committee of the Foundation according to the scholarship regulations. A positive decision is conducive to contracting between the Foundation and the applicant and his/her parents, under which the latter commit themselves to spending the total amount of the support on the studies of the beneficiary.

Moreover, the Foundation supports the participation at contests, incl. travel costs and meals of several socially underprivileged primary and secondary school students. Let us mention the children receiving personalised support by name: Levente Csipak from Csóka (aged 14, student of Bolyai Talent Support Gymnasium, Zenta) and Idikó Zsoldos from Orom (aged 15, student of Svetozar Marković Gymnasium, Szabadka) who could study in the United States for a year. The Foundation granted one-off cash support to talents participating at the student Olympiads. That's how Annamária Piri of Zenta (student of Bolyai Talent Support Gymnasium, Zenta), who won a remarkable place at age 17 as member of the Serbian girls' mathematics team at the Cambridge Girls' Mathematical Olympiad of 2012, was supported. Miklós Homolya of Mohol was supported by Bolyai Farkas Foundation on two occasions. First as a primary school pupil (aged 13 Novak Radonić Primary School, Mohol) he won the bronze medal in 2006 at the Balkan IT Olympiad organised on Cyprus. And in 2007, when he took part with Foundation support at the International IT Olympics of Mexico where he won a silver medal for his outstanding performance. Alfréd Asztalos, the young talent of Orom, aged 18 (student of the Academy of Music in Novi Sad) took part in 2006 at the event organised for the talented young musicians of Europe in Bucharest. Ákos Kormányos from Zenta (aged 18, student of Zenta Gymnasium) and János Locki (aged 17, student of Bolyai Talent Support Gymnasium, Zenta) took part at the 2012

Huston (USA) I-SWEEEP, International Sustainable World Project Olympiad event and the Milset 9th Expo Science Europa in Tula, Russia with the support of the Foundation.

2.3.5. Publications

The Foundation has published six works since 2005¹⁰:

- RIPCÓ SIPOS Elvira, *Geometria I.*(Geometry, I), Zenta, 2008.
- Dr. GUBÁS Jenő, *Értelmiségünk bölcsője. A belgrádi magyar egyetemista egyesületek története* (The cradle of our intelligentsia. History of the Hungarian university societies of Belgrade), Zenta, 2009.
- VARJÚ POTREBIĆ Tatjana, VIDA János, *A Tehetségek Szolgálatában. I. Nemzetközi Tehetséggondozó Konferencia* (At the service of the talented. First International Talent Support Conference), Magyarakanizsa, 2009.
- CSIKÓS PAJOR Gizella, PÉICS Hajnalka, *Analízis elméleti összefoglaló és példatár* (Analysis, Theoretical summary and collection of tests), Zenta, 2010 (also on DVD)).¹¹
- BÉRES Zoltán, CSIKÓS PAJOR Gizella, PÉICS Hajnalka, *Algebra elméleti összefoglaló és példatár* (Algebra, Theoretical summary and collection of tests), Zenta, 2011.¹²
- KORMÁNYOS Róbert, *Biológia* (Biology), Zenta, 2012.

2.3.6. Talent Point

The Foundation joined the talent point network established by the *National Talent Support Council* at the end of 2008. Pursuant to the relevant decision of the Accreditation Committee commissioned by the Association of Hungarian Talent Support Organisations, it has been entitled to use the title of Bolyai Talent Point, Accredited Excellent Talent Point since 2010. The relevant diploma and honorary plaque were handed over at a ceremony held in Budapest as part of the 2nd *National Conference of Talent Points*.

¹⁰ The Foundation has made the textbooks accessible at its website.

¹¹ <http://www.bolyaifarkas.org.rs/hu/analizisjegyzet.pdf>

¹² http://www.bolyaifarkas.org.rs/hu/AlgebraJegyzet_2011.pdf

The objectives of the talent support activity of Bolyai Talent Point are the following: skills/capability development; preparation for competitions; preparation for admission to secondary school; complex talent care; individualisation; extra-curricular programmes; mentoring; individual development; support for the autonomous work of the student. The talent point provides complex talent support in three fields: spatial-visual, logical-mathematical and natural sciences fields, respectively. The sessions take the form of workshop activities, individual or collective ones, as necessary.

Almost 165 students and 15 specialist teachers take part continuously in the workshop activities. The smooth operation of the workshop sessions concerned has been ensured in both 2010 and 2011 by application-based support of HUF 2, 800 000 granted to the school under the tender announced by the Public Foundation for Education.

2.4. Talent support activity of the Foundation

Bolyai Farkas Foundation, active since 2005, is permanently on the lookout for the talented and the gifted studying in Hungarian and gives them support via its talent care programme- Its goal and motto is: *“Not a single talent should be lost”*

The activity of Bolyai Farkas Foundation is of a regional nature, that is, it covers a major part of ethnic Hungarians in Serbia. It is significant for Hungarians living in larger groups, and especially for the Hungarian youth living in the diaspora. The former can find themselves further educational, cultural and general educational opportunities in the bigger towns of Voivodina, but talented students living in minor villages or on isolated farms do not. Their fate would be predetermined without the support of Bolyai Farkas Foundation.

Since September 2005, 5 500 students and 600 teachers, psychologists and specialist teachers took part in our programmes. Moreover, the membership of the *Circle of Friends* of the Foundation has been increasing year on year. Currently, it has 350 members, former student of educational institutions in Voivodina.

Bolyai Farkas Foundation is a founding member of the National Talent Support Council and the Association of Talent Support Organisations, and recently it has carried out effective activity also in the National Talent Co-ordination Forum and the Szabadka-based Voivodian talent Support Council (VATT).

2.5. Charity Ball

The Foundation organises its most successful Charity Balls every year. It allocates the donations to supporting talented Hungarian children in Serbia and covering the costs of their travels to national and international competitions. In 2012, more than a hundred donors offered cash and in-kind support to promote the talent support cause.

2.6. Other data of the Foundation

Funding for the complex activities of Bolyai Farkas Foundation is secured mainly through tenders announced in Hungary and in Serbia.

In the last five years, most of the support funds came from *Szülőföld Alap Iroda, Bethlen Gábor Alap, Határon túli Magyarok Hivatala, Nemzeti Tehetség Program, Balassi Intézet, Szekeres László Foundation, Tartományi Jogalkotási, Közigazgatási és Nemzeti Kisebbségi Titkárság, Zenta Önkormányzat and Oktatásért KözAlapítvány*. Major support was provided to the activity of the Foundation by *Termo-Gas Senta*, the Belgrade office of *Richter Gedeon* and the Zenta branch of *NLB Bank Belgrade*. Our special thanks are due to *Tímea Koós Holló* of Ada, *Zsolt Velez* of Kanizsa and *Irén Tóth Isaszegi* of Hamburg for their unselfish financial support for years to promote the implementation and continuity of the talent identification and nurturing activities of the Foundation. The Foundation spent almost EUR 250 000 since 2005 on implementing its programmes.

3. Club of Nature Researchers

The Club of Nature Researchers (Natura Kutatók Klubja) is a non-governmental non-profit association of civilians. Since its registration, i.e. 2 June 1998, it has been active in talent support and in stimulating exploratory activities in the natural sciences fields, as well as environmental education and the preparation of students for various natural sciences competitions. Its founding members are mainly active teachers, ready to do extra-curricular activities.

3.1. Main fields of activity of the Club

3.1.1. Summer camps

- *Tisza, a közreműködés folyója* (Tisza, river of contribution) – international environmental knowledge and nature protection camp co-organised by the directorate of Kiskunság National Park (Zenta, Lakitelek, Tőserdő)
- „*Tisz_a vizet a pohárba* (Clean water in the cup: a pun on the Hungarian words Tisza/tiszta)” - international environmental knowledge and protection summer camp on the topic of the cyanide pollution of the river Tisza and its consequences (Zenta).
- *Táj és Ember I* (Landscape and man, I). – international environmental and ethnographic camp (Zenta).
- *Táj és Ember II.* (Landscape and man, II). – international environmental and ethnographic camp (Zenta).

3.1.2. Media activity

After the systems change, the Foundation organised and led weekly radio programmes entitled *Green Papers* on the wavelength of the radio of Zenta town on environmental policy, environmental strategies and environmental education, on international conventions, environment and nature protection, sustainable development and the social sector.

3.1.3. Dissemination of scientific information, propagation of science

TEO - *Tudomány Egy Órában* (Science in an hour)¹³ is a lecture series of Voivodian relevance dedicated to the propagation of science, the equivalent of the Hungarian University of Knowledge, of which the seventh annual series is being organised now at Zenta. In the six years so far some 50 Hungarian university professors, members of the Academy, ministers, renown film directors and theologian from Hungary and Voivodina held one-hour lectures on their respective fields of science. The lectures take place once a month, on Thursday, from 18.00, at the great hall of Zenta Theatre. They introduce the youth to the various fields of science and give them an insight also to the life careers of researchers and scientists that may serve as role models subsequently.

¹³ In 2003, some Voivodian youth (from the surroundings of Zenta) thought of launching a lecture series to propagate science, modelled on the University of Knowledge series. The idea came from Ákos Török (president, Ada, programming), Zolt Divéki (president, Zenta, physics, astronomy), László Huszák (Zenta, medicine), Zoltán Lipinszki (Zenta, biology), Tamás Nagy (Zenta, physics), Dániel Rózsa (Zenta, architecture) and Emil Vatai (Zenta, mathematics).

3.2. Talent support programmes of the Club of Nature Researchers

The scope of the activity of the Club of Nature Researchers includes all secondary school students interested specially in the natural sciences, coming from the territory of Voivodina and studying in Zenta and the neighbouring settlements (Ada, Magyarakanizsa, Csóka, Törökkanizsa). The programme of the Club focuses on the preparation of secondary school students for domestic and international study contests and on leading workshops and research activities.

4. Summary

The significant Serbian institutions, NGOs and professionals of the past decade have invested lots of energy in unfolding and maintaining Hungarian talent support in Serbia and in ensuring the professional catching-up of the relevant background institutions, modelled on the international and especially the Hungarian talent support programmes, in order to ensure that not a single talented Hungarian child should get lost.

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