*Information about interviewee:*

*The interviewee, who wished to remain anonymous was a radio journalist on a Hungarian-Serbian radio station in Novi Sad, Serbia. The interview was conducted in Novi Sad, Serbia.*

*R= Respondent – Anonymous radio journalist*

*I=Interviewer – Sam Wrighton*

## I: What is the biggest challenge facing the ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina?

## R: 4 years ago the system changed, and the establishment changed dramatically. For those working in the public sector, pay was cut and salaries are now much lower than they were before. This is where Fidesz are helping. They have a strong connection with the ethnic Hungarians here in Vojvodina, but the biggest challenge is trying to keep these communities here and stop them leaving.

## I: How do the ethnic Hungarians perceive Fidesz?

## R: Fidesz are extremely popular. I imagine around 90 percent of the Vojvodina Hungarians would vote for them. The Prosperitati foundation is also proving very popular. This economic development fund is really helping those with small businesses and those in agriculture. 90% of those who apply for these grants, win them. However, I don’t think it is going to be enough to stop the demographic issues here personally. The VMS and Fidesz have an extremely close relationship and Hungarian- Serbian relations are at the strongest they have ever been. Hungary needs Serbia to cooperate with their plans to engage the Hungarian population here and Serbia needs Hungary for their ambitions to get into the EU. It is therefore a strange interdependent relationship. VMS works as a bridge between the two countries, but they have been criticised recently as the ruling party (SNS) introduced austerity measures and now VMS is in bed with the SNS this is not that popular. However, they are trying to repair the relationship between Hungary and Serbia. We could see this 3 years ago when the Serbian prime minister visited the memorial of the death of the Hungarians at the hands of the Serbian partisans. Now we at the radio station play Serbian music which before would have been unheard of!

## I: How has the dual nationality law changed things in Vojvodina?

## R: Many people have left with their new EU passport to go to Western Europe.

Travel has of course been made easier. When this policy was announced everyone thought the process would be extremely strict. However it wasn’t! There were Serbs who applied, and some got in. Some got rejected. But those that were rejected were simply told to learn some Hungarian and come back. The media was told to spread the word that this was a massive opportunity to take. Orbán made countless speeches about the dual-nationality law and the campaign was intense. We were very busy during this period. The process was very quick. I got my passport in one or two weeks. And I have to say that the ceremony at the Hungarian consulate in Subotica was very special. It made me very proud to be Hungarian. It was a nice gesture.

It was also free. We only had to pay admirative fees for the passports of about 20 euros but the naturalisation was free. This year there has been a change, meaning that we can now receive Hungarian ID cards which used to be tied to a residential address in Hungary. This means I can now get credit in Hungary and am no longer any different to the Hungarians living in Hungary.

## I: To what extent does Fidesz control the VMS?

## R: I would say absolute total control. I am absolutely certain that the VMSZ is being funded by Fidesz. Although there is a high degree of political control, it is interesting that when Fidesz campaigns in Vojvodina they always do it from the point of view that it is simply important to vote and Orbán tells us all “vote for who you think is the most sympathetic to you”. This is an in-direct way of saying “vote for us!”. They also mention that it is the Hungarian duty to vote.

## I: To what extent is the media controlled by Fidesz?

## R: In-directly again, we work a lot with the VMS.

We have a strong working relationship with the Hungarian state too. They pay us monthly to produce reports and we produce these reports for them. I am unhappy with this relationship. It got to a point where some senior staff at the office told us not to think and that they will do the thinking for us. The VMS have tightened their grip on the media in Vojvodina and there is a lot of self-censorship going on. Myself included. This has had an impact on the party as a whole and resulted in a brain drain. Many of the academics and intellectuals have since left the party because of these heavy-handed repressive tendencies and it has also affected the Hungarian national council, which has become increasingly fragmented and inactive. There was a point when they were calling 2 or 3 press conferences a week, now this is done to one every 6 months?

## I: Why do you believe Mr Orbán wants to engage with the Hungarians in Vojvodina?

## R: Undoubtedly his primary concern is to strengthen his position. He wants absolute control and wants to remain in charge of Hungary until his death. He takes the view that everyone can be bought and sadly I think it is working. He surrounds himself with professionals and businessmen and he knows people’s price and their wants. Most of the politicians related to Fidesz and VMSZ have side businesses and they can earn a lot of money combining business and politics. One of his main methods of control is propaganda. Propaganda against Brussels, migrants and George Soros. Some of the propaganda is too extreme for us to air. They will ask us to manipulate stories or fabricate them completely to suit their needs at that time. Sometimes my senior edits let them, but we also have a line. We know however that to be a journalist now, it simply does not pay to be an investigative journalist in Serbia when we can earn a comfortable living for us and our families by pedalling propaganda. Unfortunately this is the reality. The migrant crisis was extremely beneficial for Orbán as he managed to win a lot of support of Hungarians in Hungary and in Vojvodina and this was undeniably down to the propaganda surrounding this situation.

## I: Do you believe there is any corruption in Vojvodina?

## R: There were rumours that the Prosperitati fund may have been a tool to allow for greater corruption. A list was leaked that was supposedly showing the beneficiaries of a first wave of money from Hungary. These people on this list happened to be the richest in the area and also those connected with VMS. However, since this story, there has been no proof that the fund is corrupt. I have absolutely no doubts that Fidesz finance the VMSZ. Of course, this is illegal, but they do it anyway. There is no transparency. You should know that very recently the VMSZ bought the most expensive building in Vojvodina, maybe even in Serbia to use as their home office. How did they get the money for this?