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Report on Aromanian Language in Romania
to Mr. Philip Blair
Language Policy Division
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The reason of this report is to bring into your attention the language policy regarding the Aromanian language in Romania. Since April 2005 untill present we addressed many requests to the state institutions in order to allow the Aromanian language to be saved. The answers were ambiguous or there was no answer. Our surprise is even greater as, by ignoring our explicit demands, the Government elaborated a legal draft in order to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in which the Aromanian language is not registered; so it would not be protected in Romania.

1. Who we are
The Aromanian Community from Romania (ACR) was founded in 1991, as an association, having the status of a juridical Romanian private person, without patrimony reasons, an NGO, as the wish of the Romanian citizens of Aromanian origins to join into an association and to be organized in an institutional frame. At this moment, the members of ACR counts over 4.000 (out of 27.000 Aromanians officially recorded at the latest census), in five subsidiaries with juridical competence: Bucharest and Constanta, Calarasi, Ialomita, Tulcea districts. The Community has been formed in Romania especially by the immigration of 30.000 Aromanians since 1925. The main reason of the Community is to maintain and develop the Aromanian language, traditions and the whole Aromanian cultural and spiritual specific features. At the same time, the Community proposes to facilitate the contact and connections with Aromanians who live in the original territory of the Balkan Peninsula, as well as Aromanian Communities from other states. To the same effect, one main objective is to get help from the public

authorities regarding: the training of Aromanian language teachers and the introduction of the Aromanian language in schools as a mother tongue; the use of the Aromanian language in the religious service; access at mass media and editing books, journals and newspapers in Aromanian language. Saving the Aromanian language and culture was mentioned in the Recommendation no. 1333/1997 of the Council of Europe, the danger of Aromanian language disappearance is recorded in the UNESCO Red Book. The Community demands that these documents must be applied. In this purpose, ARC declared 2005 as " The year of the Aromanian culture and civilization", by mutual agreement with other Aromanian organizations and cultural associations from Balkans (i.e. Sofia, Skopje, Elbasan).

2. Aromanian language

As many other European languages, many of Latin origin, in danger of disappearance (like Occitan, Sardinian, Friulan), Aromanian language is the language of a vivid culture, although it is less and less spoken as it hasn't the proper means of promotion, a real language policy. Aromanian is a language, which needs a coherent language and cultural policy to survive. However, some particularities of the geographical dispersion of the members of our community, on one hand, and the norms and regulations for mother tongue teaching in Romania, on the other hand, are the difficulties to overcome in order to save the language.

The Aromanian community is not compact on the territory, because native Aromanian speakers are to be found in different proportions, generally low ones, in a number of localities dispersed in the South-East of Romania and in the Capital, Bucharest: i.e., if in Stejaru, Tulcea district, there are more than 60% Aromanian people, in Bucharest they are less than 0,1%. More consequences are generated by this matter of fact, regarding the language maintenance and the attitude of subjects to their mother tongue. Firstly, the communication function of the language is fulfilled only in family, in small groups of relatives, living in the same neighborhood or gathering on special occasions. Secondly, due to the low number of Aromanian pupils in one and the same school, teaching the Aromanian language is hindered by the legal regulations: the minimum sufficient number of pupils ; didactic quota for teachers; teachers has also to be Aromanian and employee of the school; the daily program, etc. Thirdly, the school, the media, the friend group, the work team are pressing factors in

favor of assimilation, and the linguistic accommodation to the monolingual environment is very high and in progress.

Till now, only the ACR (from Constanta, Calarasi, Ialomita, Tulcea districts) and the Aromanian Cultural Society (ACS) (from Bucharest) initiated in Romania courses of Aromanian culture and traditions, in a form accepted by The Ministry of Research and Education (MRE).

3. What do we want

ACR' and other cultural associations' members, especially created since 1990, would like the Aromanian language to be considered as a mother tongue

in Romania. The Community directs its steps towards this main objective.

Important documents of the Community's General Assembly:

-Vrearea a Armanjloru (The Aromanians' wish), April 16th, 2005

-Resolution, August 28th, 2005

The Resolution points out the wish of ACR's members to apply its right of

practicing the Aromanian language as a mother tongue and to save the Aromanian language and culture from disappearance.

The Aromanian's wish, as well as the Resolution appeals first of all to the

qualified Romanian institutions, but also to the Council of Europe as an

authority in the process of maintaining and promoting the Aromanian language and culture.

4. What we have accomplished

National Aromanian Day (May 23rd) in Bucharest and Constanta in 2004 and

2005, represented every time an important moment of pointing out the directions of action of the ACR in the cultural field.

The two editions of Aromanian Cultural Days, Constanta 2004 and 2005, where

thousands of Aromanians participated, members or not of ACR, generated debates on the question of the Aromanian language teaching and learning as

a mother tongue in Romania.

A fact which should be noticed is that the communication language was only the Aromanian at these events; the same happened at the scientific conferences, where essays, poems, traditional songs and new compositions

were presented. On those occasions we organized new books presentations (on

Aromanians; written by contemporary Aromanian authors; reprints of classics; translations in Aromanian language). We also released documentary

films in Aromanian language, on present day subjects. The participants were

from Romania, Greece, Albania, Fyrom, Serbia, Bulgaria. The common message

was about maintaining and developing the Aromanian language. The public

participated enthusiastic at these events, being thrilled by the large organizatorical level.

Meanwhile, the Romanian media reflected our cultural events, as always, in a truncated and partial way (see the analysis made by Nicolas Trifon in Courrier des Balkans).

5. From Lluís Maria de Puig's Report, January 1997, to present
The de Puig Report was based on a questionnaire about the Aromanian's linguistic and cultural rights sent in September 1995 to qualified authorities in Albania, Greece, FYROM, Bulgaria, Romania, to the Union for the Aromanian Language and Culture in Freiburg, Germany, to different Aromanian cultural associations. As Romania concerns, de Puig finds out that there were 28.000 Aromanians (statistic dates from 1992), there was no education in Aromanian language at any level, there was a monthly publication subsidized by the Cultural Ministry (with only 25% Aromanian texts), there were some radio programmes, but rarely TV apparitions, that the cultural associations were organizing a number of cultural events, but without any help from the state authorities.

What do we notice in 2005?

There are optional classes on Aromanian culture and traditions only at primary levels of education in some places, there is no more subsidized magazine by Ministry of Culture, a local radio programme of only 45 minutes once a week, few apparitions in TV programmes with the efforts of

The Aromanian Cultural Society and the ACR, these NGO's organize cultural events of vast proportions, self-financed (i.e. Aromanian Cultural Days, 2 editions, traditional holidays).

Two different periodical publications use the Aromanian language: "Bana Armaniasca" (self-financed, quarterly magazine, on its 9th year of existence) and "Habarea Armaniasca" (informative official report of ACS,

2-4 pages, A-4 format). Tulcea subsidiary of the ACR has recently edited

the first number of "Daima" magazine.

The Aromanian Book Publishing House [Editura Cartea Aromana] and "Rivista

di Litiratura shi Studii Armani" from Constanta edit original literature

(mainly poetry), reprints of classics, translations, unpublished manuscripts.

All these events are obviously insufficiently to talk about an efficient cultural activity, with impact on community and with results for saving the Aromanian language.

A real language policy to protect the Aromanian language issued by Romanian

authorities don't exist, neither interest, nor sustain for the actions undertaken by ACR or ACS. It may be a systematically indifference and

ignorance of our efforts, a minimalisation of the Aromanian language and culture in Romania. I draw attention to these aspects in the conference I have sustained on March 31, 2005 at the Romanian Academy. Unfortunately, the Romanian Academy goes on issuing opinions opposed to the Aromanian language speaker's wish.

6. Problems. Causes. The actual state of Dialogue with the Romanian institutions.

Some aspects of perceiving the Aromanian language at the scientific, political, official level in Romania in the last century explain the inertness and the lack of receptivity of the Romanian institutions at the

requests of ACR regarding the Aromanian language problems.

The traditional definition of Aromanian language is as a dialect of a preromantic language which existed approximately until 10 century. At that

time the Aromanian tore off in South and Dacoromanian in North. This presupposition, by a simplification and diminution of the historical evolution, makes the Aromanian language to be considered as a dialect of an

extinct language. In the 19th and 20th centuries, even now at the beginning

of a new century, Aromanian is named simply as a dialect of the Romanian

language. Romanian is the official, literary and national language of Romania. A genealogical definition shaped for the 7-10 centuries in order

to underline a linguistical unity, far away homogeneous and without written

attestations, turns into a superficial label, into a definition for hierarchical purposes, namely: a dialect is inferior to the language, so

Aromanian is inferior to the Romanian language, so it doesn't have to be

learned and cultivated, only studied as a living vestige, a kind of preserved curiosity in a museum, a kind of a fossil.

The Aromanian language speakers wish, ACR members, who continues to speak

this language, to create Aromanian culture of European level, is to offer

the Aromanian language the status of a European language.

Several steps for standardization, to normalise the language are still in

process, so is the modernisation the Aromanian terminology (see Linmter

project at the Union Latine).

However, The Ministry of Research and Education (MRE) didn't answered the

two previous statements which they received. The Ministry of Culture and

Cults (MCC) offered an ambiguous answer and postponed the request of a monthly publication subsidization in the Aromanian language, the Romanian

Radio Society replied that Radio Constata exists, although we demand

programmes with national broadcast, the Romanian TV Society didn't offered any answer.

In our contacts with MRE, MCC, as the press campaign against our efforts (Ziua, Romania Libera newspapers) the authorities are mentioning the fact that the Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society (MRCS) (since 1860) opposes the idea of the Aromanian LANGUAGE. Its position doesn't agree with the turning off from the Romanian body/trunk, a fact which took place in the 10th century, as the Romanian and Romance linguistics mentions! The paradox still exists due to the political factors during the period of Romanian State formation, in the second half of the 19th century. Actually, The MRCS was founded at that time with the reason of spreading the Romanian language and culture in Macedonia, under the Ottoman Empire, and it never had as its objective the salvation of Aromanian language. On the contrary, it agreed to the definition of Aromanian language as a dialect and it sustained the idea that the only cultural language for all Aromanians, from all their original territory, would be the Romanian language. The MRCS could't plead for the salvation of Aromanian language or for teaching the Aromanian language as a mother tongue, as their programme stipulated that the Aromanian's mother tongue is Romanian. We may strongly affirm that this organisation opposes our efforts and creates confusion.

We hope that our efforts, as the wish of the Aromanian language speakers from Romania, to be sustained by the analysis of the actual state of being, which the Division of Language Policy at the Council of Europe could achieve. We are interested in your evaluation and solutions.