



Victor Neumann

## **Relaciones entre mayorías y minorías desde una perspectiva histórico-política. El caso transilvano de Rumania.**

### **RESUMEN**

Una de las principales cuestiones planteadas en Europa Central y Oriental desde la caída del muro ha sido el desarrollo de la sociedad civil en estos países. El texto que aquí se presenta analiza esta cuestión de manera sistemática en el caso rumano. A lo largo de la primera parte se expone una somera descripción del contexto histórico-político en Europa Central y Oriental durante la época moderna, subrayando la herencia lingüística, cultural y religiosa recibida por Rumania y ciertos conceptos que forman parte de su historia intelectual y política. En la segunda parte se presenta el sistema educativo rumano, sus problemas y sus posibles soluciones en relación a una educación intercultural. Por último se ofrecen dos ejemplos: el primero es el caso de la Universidad “Babes-Bolyai” de Cluj, capital de Transilvania mostrando una política educativa multicultural con sus puntos fuertes y flojos; el segundo se refiere a la región del Banato, caracterizada por su coexistencia pacífica lo que ha facilitado la educación intercultural entre los distintos grupos religiosos y culturales.

## **Majority-Minorities Relationships in Historical and Political Perspective. The Transylvanian Case of Romania.**

### **SUMMARY**

One of the major issues of Central and Eastern Europe since the fall of the wall has been the development of civic society in these countries. This paper analyzes this issue in a systematic approach for the Romanian case. Through the first part it describes the historical and political context in Central and Eastern Europe during the modern period, highlighting that contemporary Romania has inherited different linguistic, cultural and religious groups, as well as notions and patterns regarding the political and intellectual history. Second part proceeds briefly to present the Romanian educational system, its obstacles and possible solutions in addressing intercultural education. Finally, it gives two examples: the first one is a study case of the “Babes-Bolyai” University of Cluj, an example of multicultural educational policy with its strengths and weaknesses; the second one refers to region of Banat, an area where peaceful coexistence among many cultures and religions made possible intercultural education.

**Teléfono** 91-3942404

**Fax** 91-3942499

### **Dirección postal**

Papeles del Este, Transiciones Poscomunistas.

Departamento de Economía Aplicada I. Pabellón de 2º Curso.

Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales.

Campus de Somosaguas. Pozuelo de Alarcón. 28223 Madrid. España.

### **Correo electrónico**

Información general: [papeles@ccee.ucm.es](mailto:papeles@ccee.ucm.es)

Administrador de Web: [papeles@ccee.ucm.es](mailto:papeles@ccee.ucm.es)

## **MAJORITY-MINORITIES RELATIONSHIPS IN HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE. THE TRANSYLVANIAN CASE OF ROMANIA**

©Victor Neumann\*

[vneumann@mail.dnttm.ro](mailto:vneumann@mail.dnttm.ro)

One of the major issues of Central and Eastern Europe since the fall of the Iron Curtain has been the development of civic society. In some regions a tradition of civic and human rights education already existed, and its continuation has depended on the respective country's educational policy and on decentralization. Also, in certain regions local administrations once played an important role in stimulating the coexistence of the different linguistic, religious and professional communities. These places partially preserved their multi- and intercultural character, which promoted open societies. As a consequence, these communities today are able to adjust more rapidly to the dynamics of the contemporary world, and to understand and promote pluralism and democracy. The promotion of civic and human rights education through an intercultural perspective depends both on the rational evaluation of the past, and on attempts to re-define concepts that lay in the background of the formation of the Central and Eastern European nations and states. Retrieving the multiple values that contributed to the first modernization of the area might contribute a corrective to narrow monocultural ways of thinking about the world.

Here I present the Romanian case since this issue has not thus far been approached systematically in the light of these considerations. In the first part I describe the historical and political context in Central and Eastern Europe during the modern period. This would highlight that contemporary Romania has inherited different linguistic, cultural and religious groups, as well as notions and patterns regarding the political and intellectual history. Then, I proceed briefly to present the Romanian educational system, its obstacles and possible solutions in addressing intercultural education. Finally, I give two examples: one is a study case of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj, a city of Transylvania with predominantly Romanian, Hungarian and German speaking populations. This

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\* Professor of East-Central European History. University of the West of Timisoara.

part presents an example of multicultural educational policy with its strengths and weaknesses. The second example refers to the region of Banat, an area where peaceful coexistence among many cultures and religions made possible intercultural education.

### ***The Historical and Political Framework***

For a closer approach to the issue, I have introduced the main political ideas of Central and Eastern Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These were the intellectual references of the modern Romanian state, and the domestic and international political context that contributed to state formation. The study reveals as well the ideological options in the communities of this area over the last two centuries. The political and administrative legacies left behind by the histories of the two empires, the Habsburg and the Ottoman, enables one to discover where the issue of interculturality have come, how it survived, and what pedagogical role it might play today. Nineteenth century concepts – like ethnicity or *Völkischekultur* – are still in circulation in certain countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Romania among them, thus justifying the necessity for the revaluation of the political and educational ideas in this area. The reference bibliography in the background of nationalism emphasizes why multi- and intercultural education was *a priori* rejected in favor of monocultural and collectivist education.

A well-grounded approach to this issue in Central and Eastern Europe requires on the one hand, taking account of the content and the flow of information in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and, therefore, the effort of emancipation, and the effort of consciousness raising, on the other. The processes are not taking place in the same way throughout the above-mentioned area. Economic policies (i.e. the ones of the Habsburg Empire during the Enlightened Despotism of Maria Theresa and of Joseph II) decisively contributed to create a real communication network, thus raising small intellectual revolutions. In spite of the difference in mentality between Western Europe, on the one hand, and Central and Eastern Europe, on the other, one could see that the intellectuals were successful in regions where they succeeded in spreading Enlightenment ideas, where they managed to introduce pragmatic information in their communities, and where

they were concerned with the understanding and translating literary, philosophical and political works<sup>1</sup>.

Even though the Habsburg Empire included an enormous variety of communities inside its borders, it was committed to encourage their emancipation from the medieval mentality and it passed legislation that imposed linguistic, cultural and religious diversity. Under the pressure of the German *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment), the empire provided the minimum training to its people necessary for their economic development. Illiteracy of an important part of the communities living in Central Europe was overcome for the first time in the years of the Enlightened Despotism (1780-1790). The normative restrictions of the Austrian state were aimed at developing the bourgeoisie and capitalism, at gradually replacing traditionalism with modernization, and at providing quite uniform living standards in all the regions under its rule.

The Habsburgs' concern was to achieve a kind of "Austrian consciousness" that would ensure the empire's unity and security. Vienna insisted on imposing its reference system and to enforce its power over all its provinces through more or less discreet proceedings<sup>2</sup>. These measures met the empire's political interests. The imperial concern for raising the administrative and economic competences to a satisfactory standard played a challenging role for the small developing linguistic communities inside its borders. However, despite the monarchy's effort to build the "Austrian consciousness", ethno-nationalist movements began to develop in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of Prussian cultural and ideological propaganda.

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed presentation of the cultural and political life, of the multiple identities and their convergence in Central and Eastern Europe during the Enlightenment period, see Victor Neumann, *The Temptation of Homo Europeus. The Genesis of the Modern Ideas in Central and South-eastern Europe*, (Boulder, Colorado; New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), East European Monographs, pp. 125-149, the chapter: "Homo Europaeus and the Intellectual Revolution of the Enlightenment".

<sup>2</sup> The examples offered by the process of the emancipation of Romanians and Serbs in the Empire are relevant in the sense. See, also Keith Hitchins: *The Romanian National Movement in Transylvania, 1780-1849*, (Harvard University Press, 1969); Idem, *The Idea of Nation: The Romanians of Transylvania 1691-1849*, (Bucharest: Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1985); Andrija B. Stojkovic, *Filosofski pogledi Dositeja Obradovica. Les vues philosophiques de Dositej Obradovic*, (Beograd, 1980).

I will particularly emphasize the period of intellectual assimilation and mutations as regards reflection about life and the historicist trend of the history of thought. However, beginning with the Romantic period the sophism of metaphysical historicism prevailed over the critical spirit. Analyzing the lag in the East-European countries, István Bibó concluded that as the national frame was not destroyed in this part of the continent, the bourgeois revolutions at the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century only resurrected the medieval endeavors. He considered all medieval entities in Central and Eastern Europe to have survived either through institutions, or in a symbolic way through memories. Despite their provincialism, they represented a political stimulus which was hardly negligible in relation to the Austrian power which otherwise was neither too old nor too well rooted. According to the same historian, things were not very different in Southeastern Europe, where the Ottoman Empire was not able to force the Balkan nations into a proper national structure, namely to create integrated bodies, valid for any independent political entity<sup>3</sup>.

This cannot be understood in the light of nationalism exclusively as developed in the scheme proposed by Bibó. On the one hand, the religious and linguistic traditions of the regional communities within both empires were preserved in spite of all difficulties and, on the other hand, modern emancipation was belated due to the lack of administrative and political structures to surpass the backward mentalities. More specifically, the regions under discussion benefited neither from the Enlightenment nor from the Religious Reform in the Western acceptance. These two movements echoed in Central Europe, but not in the Balkans.

<sup>3</sup> Bibó István, "A kelet-európai kissállamok nyomorusága" [Misery of the Small States of Eastern Europe, o.n.], in Idem *Összegyűjtött Munkái* [Complete Works, u.n.] 1, edition prepared by István Kemény and Mátyás Sárközi, with a foreword of Árpád Szölösi and with an introduction of Zoltán Szabó. (Munich: Magyar Szabadegyetem-Bern, 1981), pp. 202-252. See also the French edition: István Bibó, *Misère des petits Etats d'Europe de l'Est*, translated from Hungarian by György Kassai, (Paris: Editions l'Harmattan, 1986). Bibó was one of the most important characters of intellectual and political life in Central and Eastern Europe. From the perspective of the history of political thought it can be said that he was the personality who mostly contributed to opening political thinking in Hungary. He was and still remains a first rank theorist to whom the Hungarian political culture in recent decades relates. His works refer both to the confusions in the history of political thought, and to the history of Hungary and the neighboring countries' as well.



Even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Southeastern Europe did not fall under the Western influence; there were even less of the religious, cultural, scientific and political disputes which opened and deeply marked the modern world. The very few exceptions of cultural and political endeavors to modernize the state and society in Southeastern Europe -- the case of scholars Theophil Corydaleu and Dimitrie Cantemir -- are quite atypical for the area. Though it contains multiple cultural heritages (i.e. the Greek, Thracian, Roman and the Byzantine) Southeastern European civilization was not touched by the changes produced by the scientific and political thinking of the Renaissance. To what historic and political processes was this isolation due? Many reasons are invoked by historians in answer to this question, the Turkish occupation usually being in the foreground. But facts revealed through documentary research show that historians are seldom right in referring to this argument. There are other reasons which cannot be ignored, such as: the weight of the Orthodox religion in the political and juridical life; the rejection of the religious Reform and its doctrine; the Church-State relationship; the caste privileges and their role in the political circles; the importance of the rural community in forming mentalities; and the proclamation of obedience to the dominant social category.

One has to admit as well that both the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires contributed to the spread of a new tolerance; to the promotion of East-West dialogue, to the development of trade policies; to introducing and spreading some bourgeoisie principles; and to the political emancipation of the people. The coexistence of different denominations such as the Catholic, the Orthodox, the Lutheran, the Calvinist, the Jewish and the Mohammedan was possible due to the permissiveness of Vienna and Constantinople.

The assertion of the national identities contributed to setting-up the national states in Central and Eastern Europe. The temptation of each group to write its own history was due to their political interests in shaping national awareness. The elaboration and propagation of the question of identity in the most varied forms generated a normative outlook about the past and the future. Education through history became the main goal of intellectuals and policy makers. The new approach to the past consisted in purposefully highlighting the issue of "origin", in generating archetypes, in using the sophism of the metaphysical historicism and in overlapping dreams and illusions with reality. This practice would eventually lead to the creation of the "ethno-national" myth that had to

fulfill the political options of the communities no matter where they lived. Instead of the imperial cosmopolitanism, the local political circles would promote the monocultural pedagogy and respectively ethno-differentiation as identity ideology.

During the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a few German theorists and philosophers who advocated the nation-state concept won great sympathy, becoming either the most read scholars or, simply, reference points for a few generations of educated people in Central and Eastern Europe. Among them were Johann Gottfried Herder is to be mentioned whose work fascinated not only his generation, but especially the next (the revolutionaries of 1848). Along with Fichte's work, Herder had a brilliant ideological career and became known especially through his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*<sup>4</sup>. We must ask what was most notable in this Romantic philosopher's work and how it succeeded in becoming a reference point in Central-Eastern Europe's political literature. It is a question that is challenging to the degree that it invites unconventional answers.

Herder was attracted by almost all the sciences of that time: the philosophy of history, the history of culture and of humanism, and the history of religions and peoples' mythology. The attraction to greatness was primary in his mind as on this depended the people's happiness or unhappiness, their demeanor and physiognomy, their conversation and occupation. The same feeling of greatness inspired his appetite for poetry and for stories and might equally have determined his interest in speculation and the so-called very "essence" of philosophy. The propensity towards language and folklore, specific to

<sup>4</sup> *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, was the work that stirred positive comments in all cultures of Central and Eastern Europe. It was a first rank reference during the region's Europeanization because its political messages met the aspirations of the forming nations in the mentioned regime. German culture and civilization was greatly enjoyed by the population of these regions, often being considered a point of absolute reference. The lack of a critical spirit and of the possibilities of comparing -- justified only through the perpetuation of isolation inside a folk culture for a long time -- encouraged shallow and one-sided reception. We could mention, among others, that the Anglo-Saxon political and philosophical thought did not play an important role in Central and Eastern Europe. For Herder's reception by Romanians and Hungarians, see Victor Neumann: *Convergente spirituale. Studii privind istoria relațiilor politice și culturale în Europa Centrală și de Est, 1750-1850* [Spiritual Convergences. A Survey on the Political and Cultural Relations in Central and Eastern Europe, 1750-1850], (Bucharest, 1986), pp. 16-38, 38-56, and 84-103.



Romanticism had a very clear political motivation, namely nation-state building. According to Herder, language is the stimulus of the soul's resources, for culture and for the "deepest education". His enthusiasm for his own language had no limits. In his view, language must be the bridge linking between different provinces; moreover, a good education could be received exclusively in the language of the people and of the country in which one was born. He established a subtle way of approaching individual biography through one's place of origin. The submission to space becomes defining and confinement within language borders favors creation. These viewpoints were quite simple to assimilate, all the more so in societies where individualism was rejected *ab initio*.

Herder's benign internationalism, is reflected in his interest for the African past mixed with attraction for Asian history, Southeastern European ethnography and ancient languages, where nations were perceived as individuals or super-individuals<sup>5</sup>. All this contributed to the foundation of his nation-state theory. In the German philosopher's view unity and diversity are features describing all lasting creations of nature. He stated also that education, formation and the way of thinking the human being were genetic, wherefrom arise the particularity of national features. Herder thought about himself as being contemporary with an end of an era; he considered that the political systems were in crisis, and hence unstable. In his view, the old political practices were not sufficiently flexible to adapt the nation-state theory. In fact, Herder wanted to teach people to understand everything through their historical determination. The success of his ideology came to life through the nationalist doctrine in many regions of the Habsburg Empire and territories of the Ottoman Empire<sup>6</sup>.

Fichte played a similar role in the modern history of political thought by widely promoting certain myths. This is not about the Fichte of *Wissensschaftslehre*, but the Fichte who wrote *Reden an die Deutsche Nation* in 1807-1808, a work that contributed to the "nation" concept elaboration, more exactly to the concept of

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, (Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> The first French edition of his main work: *Idées sur la philosophie de l'histoire de l'humanité*, translated by Edgar Quinet, (Paris, 1834) circulated in Greece and Romania. In Bohemia, Hungary, and Transylvania the work was read in the original. For its influence in Transylvania, see, for example, Iosif Wolf: "Die rumänische Herderrezeption im Vormärz und Perspektiven", in *Cahiers roumains d'études littéraires*, no. 2, 1979. For Herder's influence in forming of the neo-Greek political culture, see C. Th. Dimaras: *Neoellinikos diafotismos*, (Athene, 1977).

“Romantic autopoetic nationalism”. Fichte's image of the Frenchman as the archetype of the enemy is a quite notorious example of inciting and manipulating public opinion. The irrational nationalism formulated by the philosopher was taken over and adapted by the intelligentsia of Central and Eastern Europe, which became the teacher of the nations. This concept can be found today, in the image of diversity, of majority-minorities relations, and of the relationship between neighboring nations. Fichte also inspired the idea that it was not concrete reason, but the metaphysical status that ensured the outstanding historical achievements of a nation.

Recent studies reveal that many variants of European nationalism exist, namely, those inspired by Herder and by Fichte<sup>7</sup>. The neo-Greeks, the Romanians, the Magyars (Hungarians), the Albanians and the Serbs immediately took Herder as a milestone when they find out that he advocated their right to express themselves in their respective languages. Living in the 1848 revolutionary milieu of Paris and having at his disposal the French edition of Herder's main work, *Idées sur la Philosophie de l'Histoire de l'Humanité*, the Romanian politician, Nicolae Bălcescu, was deeply committed to such concepts as, “historic destiny” and “grandness”. He assimilated both from Herder and from Edgar Quinet all that referred to the issue of ethnic unity. Herderianism, more than any other political philosophy, would raise not only interest but also passion within the intelligentsia and policy making community. The textbooks during the 1848 Revolution afterward promoted the *Völkischekultur* (folk culture) ideas. The translations into Romanian, Hungarian, Greek and Serbian of excerpts from the German Romanticists' works demonstrate their influence within the intellectual and educational milieus in Central and Eastern Europe.

An important role in circulating his ideas was played by revolutionary programs, namely by the Revolution of 1848 itself in the Romanian Principalities. They became so popular that it is not surprising that, in Central and Eastern Europe, many politicians applied ideas elaborated by Herder without citing their author. This was the time when an irresistible wish for a rapid recovery was making itself felt, namely, the first aspiration of the peoples in the eastern half of the continent to be perceived as European. One witnesses, at the same time, the losing sight of the ability for information selection; the lack of critical spirit; the

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<sup>7</sup> See Endre Kiss, “A Typology of Nineteenth Century Concepts of Nationhood”, in *East European Quarterly*, XXX, 1, Spring, 1996, pp. 27-62.

copying of the commonly used methods by the most advanced countries and regions while ignoring the economic, social, and administrative possibilities of the Central and Eastern Europe. Enthusiasm captured mainly the intelligentsia who became the first political class in the area. This partially explains the ideological confusion on the eve of the 1848 Revolution, marking both political thought and policy making itself. The ambiguity of the ideals advanced by the revolutionists of 1848, namely liberalism and nationalism, would generate serious theoretical disputes on which depended the revolution of the political life in this region.

In the Romanian context of the assimilation of the notions of “nation” and “nation-state” history became the promoter of *Volksgeist*, namely, it proved the active role played by culture (especially the folk culture), by race and class, in a word, the superiority of the collective structures over the individual ones. Alongside historians, there were archaeologists, ethnographers, journalists and writers in the area who drew upon the German Romantic works to look for the ancestral origins of their communities. In Central and in Eastern Europe only a few of the dominant trends of the Enlightened political rationalism penetrated, and there was not sufficient time to develop the very few concepts to set-up coherent political thinking and pluralist and civic education based on reason and individual responsibility. This aspect had dramatic consequences both in the economic field, whenever the implementation of liberal doctrine was at stake, and in the social one. The concept of “ethnicity” substituted for the concept of “national”. The myths about the purism of origins, about the common religious traditions and the continuity of living in the same area, replaced the liberal and the socio-democratic values spread by the French Revolution of 1789. Mass movements and politics demanded a new political style which was possible through ethno-nationalist propaganda promoted by schools.

In the modern and contemporary history of Romania, the peasantry represented the ideal of purity of people. This is why the concept of *peuple* had in Romania different connotations from those known in France. To be more specific, while “people”, or “*people*” defined the dynamics of social emergence for the Western world, for Central and Eastern Europe, the same term defined the n of the national peculiarity<sup>8</sup>. This can well be noticed in the way the scholars understood to approach the issue of citizenship, and referred to the question of the

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<sup>8</sup> István Bibó, *op. cit.*, p. 207

emancipation of certain minority cultures and religions especially during the second half of the nineteenth century. However, in the case of the 1848 revolutionaries, the influence of the French liberalism promoted by the Great Revolution (1789) was felt for a very short time. The failure of their approach in Central and Eastern Europe -- including the Romanian Principalities -- is due not only to the late acceptance of the liberal ideas and to the very few public and private institutions that wanted to adopt the political orientation of the century, but also to the lack of intermediary social categories, able to perceive and multiply the messages that revolutionized the Western political system. A few important aspects support the above statement such as the lack of a proper administration at the beginning of the modern epoch, ignorance of the capitalist economic rules, the absence of a dynamic bourgeoisie connected to the goods market of the time, and a very thin urban social layer. The traditions of the rural collectivist way of life played a decisive role in preserving the discrepancies among the regions under discussion, and between these regions and the advanced countries. The difference between the elite and the masses was significant and in some countries it has remained until today.

The main idea here is that the historical and political background made it possible for the influence of the German Romanticism to be quickly assimilated and opened the process of its taking root in the ethno-national idea. Diverse cultural and political pedagogies turned Herder's, Fichte's and Hegel's works into reference points for the Central and Eastern European intelligentsia. One can recognize such sources when the same segment undertakes a political crusade in the name of the "collective soul". The *historia magistra vitae* syntagm that was discovered with real satisfaction in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries by writers, historians and politicians in Hungary, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria or Greece turns imperceptibly into a way of thinking about politics.

The educational system and the level of development of civic societies in East-Central and Southeastern Europe have often remained dependent of the historical reference points discussed above. I refer particularly to the monocultural orientation and to the ethnicist criterion associated with the educational process. The concrete case of the pedagogy in contemporary Romania demonstrates this. Therefore I chose it as an example and I describe it in the following part of this study.

## ***The Educational System in Romania and the Development of Civil Society***

This section concerns the multi- and intercultural realities of contemporary Romania, as well as the aspects related to the origins of the social and cultural pluralism. It emphasizes particularly the assimilative tendencies of the official educational system that hindered the assertion and the development of civic society.

Due to their history countries in Central and Eastern Europe have many common features. In Romania, intercultural education was not under serious consideration until the collapse of communism. There were a number of reasons why this form of pedagogy lagged behind, especially the lack of competencies in this field. The conservative political trends did not encourage the development of an open pedagogy to promote trans-cultural communication. Being at an incipient phase, civil society has only sporadically intervened in this process without having the expected impact on the key figures in culture and education, let alone on the politicians in power. The diverse cultural heritage of Romania could be capitalized through intercultural education.

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The *Education Law* passed by the Romanian Parliament in 1995 mentions that the state promotes the principles of a democratic education and that its organization and content cannot be structured along exclusivist and discriminatory political, ideological, religious and ethnic criteria. The right to a differentiated education is incorporated in the concept of educational pluralism<sup>9</sup>. The national educational system is comprised of:

- kindergarten including: low, medium, and high/preparatory school groups;
- compulsory education, including primary and secondary schools;
- post-secondary education including: high-school, vocational school, apprentice schools;

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<sup>9</sup> See *Education Law* 84/1995 published in Romania's Gazette, year VII, number 167, 31st of July 1995, Title I: "General Provisions", Article 5, Paragraph 2, and Article 12, Paragraph 2.



- higher education including: colleges and universities, postgraduate education (MA, MSc, MBA etc.), and doctorate.

The process of education is subordinated to the Ministry of National Education which has the following structure: Department of Financial Control; Department of International Relations; Department of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education; Department of Human and Financial Resources; Department for European Integration; Department for Primary and Secondary Education; Department for School and Extra-curriculum Activities; Department for Education, Strategy, and Development; Department for Education of National Minorities; Department for Education of Romanians Living Abroad; Department for Co-ordination of the Reform Project for Primary and Secondary Education; Department for Co-ordination of the Reform of Higher Education; Department for Curricula and Teachers Training; the *Socrates* National Agency; the *Leonardo* National Agency<sup>10</sup>.

An introduction to the responsibilities of the Ministry of National Education will reveal the type of principles that lie in its background. According to the *Education Law No. 84 of 1995*, the Ministry of National Education bears the following responsibilities:

- "to co-ordinate and control the national educational system;
- to organize the school network;
- to establish the number of pupils per school, by consulting with the schools, the local authorities and other interested local companies;
- to approve the educational plans, curricula and textbooks for primary and secondary education;
- to organize national contests for the development of textbooks and to finance their publication;
- to elaborate the methodology for the university entrance examination;
- to co-ordinate scientific research on the education system;
- to approve the establishment of secondary schools, vocational training schools, colleges and faculties;
- to approve regulations regarding the organization and function of the subordinated units;

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<sup>10</sup> "Central authorities" in *The Structure of Education and initial Training System in Romania*, The Euridyce Unit Romania, October 1996, pp. 3-4.



- to elaborate, approve and distribute education materials;
- to co-ordinate the activity of subordinated university libraries;
- to supervise the training and specialization of teachers;
- to appoint, transfer and keep the records of personnel in public schools;
- to assess the national education system;
- to elaborate and implement the long and short term strategies for educational reform;
- to elaborate the specific norms for the school constructions and facilities;
- to establish the procedure of recognition for the studies and diplomas;
- to establish the structure of each year of study, final exams, entrance examinations and school holidays for primary and secondary education;
- to develop and control the assessment system for pupils, students, teachers and professors;
- to distribute to each of its subordinate units the due share of budget and to ensure the units comply with the financial established norms;
- to develop, diagnose and assess studies for the reconstructing and modernization of the educational system;
- to develop specific programs for students with special needs (emotional, physical and psychological ones);
- to manage the administrative staff;
- to cooperate with the Romanian Diaspora in order to promote education in Romanian language abroad”<sup>11</sup>.

Therefore, the Ministry of National Education assumes the following responsibilities: to guide, control, elaborate and establish the assessment criteria of the professional merits and of approving the promotion of teachers and faculties; to establish the curricula for the primary, secondary, high and vocational schools; and to establish the salaries for the teachers, faculty and administrative staff.

The universities and educational research institutes are also subordinated to the Ministry of Education. The autonomy of the state universities is merely on paper since many of the university senate proposals must be approved through ministerial order. Accredited private educational institutions also are under the

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<sup>11</sup> See Title IV, Chapter I, Article 141: "Administration of education" in *Education Law 84/1995*.

control of the evaluation committees set-up by and within the same Ministry. The possibility of real competition is controversial in this case and quite often such methods encourage corruption in the process of accreditation of the private educational institutions. The centralist policy of the Ministry – often politically based – makes it easier for the coalition of parties in power to interfere in educational policies. The impossibility to taking decisions without consulting the higher bodies in a form of pyramidal organization essentially prevents or delays the solving of a great many of the problems of public education. The impossibility of autonomously coordinating the educational activities of universities and the County General Inspectorates obstructs not only the self-administration but also the training of trainers, teachers and faculties according to the region's social needs, interests and financial possibilities. The same centralism inherited from the previous totalitarian regimes and perpetuated by some paragraphs of the *Education Law No. 84 of 1995*, facilitates the intervention of the state officials in the administration of local institutions.

A General County School Inspectorate, headed by a General Inspector, manages the regional school network of primary and secondary education. The School Inspectorate, established in each county, is comprised of:

- “the Managing Board composed of the general inspector (president), the deputy general inspectors, the specialty inspectors, the director of the Teachers Resource Centre, the chief accountant and the legal adviser of the Inspectorate;
- the Advisory Council, composed of school directors/principals, prestigious teachers and professors, parents, representatives of the local authorities, of the religious communities and of the local companies”<sup>12</sup>.

The General Inspector, his/her deputies, and the Head of the Teachers’ Resource Centre are appointed by the Minister of Education. The main responsibilities of the County General Inspectorate are:

- “to recommend a local school network to the Ministry of Education;
- to set-up, with the approval of the Ministry of Education, public education institutions including kindergartens, primary schools, lower

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<sup>12</sup> See “Regional authorities” in *The Structure of Education and initial Training System in Romania*, The Euridyce Unit Romania, October 1996, p. 4.

secondary schools, and institutions of vocational and apprenticeship training;

- to ensure the appropriate personnel for educational institutions;
- to organize and supervise scientific research;
- to co-ordinate the organization of entrance examinations, graduation examinations and of school contests;
- to control the educational process in the dependent institutions; and
- to co-ordinate the activity of the Teacher Resource Centre and of school libraries”<sup>13</sup>.

The General Inspector of the County General Inspectorate is also president of the Council of Administration (Managing Board)<sup>14</sup>. This essentially means that all decisions are made by one single person who has absolute power, without being subjected to control by a board. The situation is similar with the school directors/principals, who are simultaneously presidents of the School Boards and presidents of the Councils of Administration. School principals direct the institutions of primary and secondary education. According to the law, the School Board and the Managing Board assist the principals in their governing activity. The principal and the assistant principals are appointed by the General Inspector<sup>15</sup>.

This centralized organization of the educational system hinders civic society initiatives. For instance, the non-governmental organizations set-up to promote education and culture must obtain the approval of the Ministry of Education and/or the Ministry of Culture to function.

How does the state relate to the relationship between the majority and minorities, and what role does it grant to these relations in the civic education?

According to Article no. 6 of the Constitution of Romania (adopted in 1992) “the state recognizes and guarantees to persons belonging to ethnic minorities the

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> See Title IV “Administration of Education”, Chapter II “School Inspectorates” in *Education Law* 84/1995 that says: “The general inspector is the president by right of the Council of Administration (Managing Board)”. This statement facilitates the breach of position, the centralism of decisions, the lack of a democratic control of the mentioned institution's management.

<sup>15</sup> See “Institutional levels” in *The Structure of Education and initial Training System in Romania*, The Euridyce Unit Romania, October 1996, p. 5.

right to preserve, develop, and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity". According to the same article, "the measures of protection taken by the government to preserve, develop and express the minorities' identity must be in accordance to the principles of equality and non-discrimination regarding other Romanian citizens". The *Law of Education* states that "the Romanian citizens have equal rights and free access to all levels and forms of education irrespective of the social and material condition, gender, race, nationality, political or religious affiliation of the individual".

However, much of the wording and content in this law allows for contradictory interpretations of the above-mentioned issues. For example, the legislator introduced stipulations that can be interpreted as restrictive such as: "during the secondary and the high school period, the *History of the Romanians* and the *Geography of Romania* are taught in Romanian", or "the main subjects – in the public education (vocational, apprentice school, economical, administrative, agrarian, forest and agro-alpine schools), as well as in post high school – are taught in Romanian, providing, as much as is possible, assimilation of the specialized terminology in the mother tongue"<sup>16</sup>.

The use of the "History of Romanians" syntagm instead of "History of Romania" for subject taught in high school and university has brought ideological disputes because it perpetuates 19<sup>th</sup> century clichés and incites contradictory viewpoints between the majority and minority populations. The law of 1995 does not reflect any systematic concern to preserve the richness of diverse traditions that might facilitate a quicker access to a pluralist culture for the Romanian citizens. The lack of stipulations regarding the study of diversity which might benefit the entire population, means only a diminution of Romania's chance to adjust to its inner multiculturalism, to the cultural diversity of Europe, and to a democratic mentality where the role of multicultural citizenship is primordial.

A few notes about minorities and regional diversity in Romania – the legacies of history – could be explanatory and would introduce the hypotheses concerning multi- and inter-cultural education.

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<sup>16</sup> See Chapter XII, Article 22, Paragraph 1: "The education for persons belonging to national minorities" in Education Law 84/1995.

### ***Minorities in Romania and Their Experience with the Educational System***

Romania has a population of 22,760,449 inhabitants (according to the census of January 1992), including a population composed of many different linguistic and religious communities. The majority group is represented by Romanians. The minorities include: Hungarians (Magyars), Romas (Gypsies), Germans, Serbs, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Czechs, Croats, Turks, Jews, Russian-Lipovans, Bulgarians, Poles, Armenians, Greeks and Italians. The most numerous minority is the Hungarian (Magyar), numbering 1,620,199 inhabitants (according to the above-mentioned census). The number of the Roma (Gypsy) population is quite uncertain, but in the 1992 census it is listed as about 409,723 inhabitants, although other statistics show 1.8 million people<sup>17</sup>. Other minorities are quite small in number (see *Appendix 1*). Two communities which once played a major role in Romania's history have decreased sensibly, namely the German and the Jewish which had 550,000 and 420,000 inhabitants respectively right after the World War II. A large number of people from both communities left Romania during the communist dictatorship for political and economic reasons.

Contemporary Romania's population shows, for the most part, a long period of living together since the Middle Ages. Multiculturalism has been favored here by the geographical diversity of the regions as well as by their administrative and political affiliation to the empires that ruled in the central, eastern and southeastern part of Europe, namely the Habsburg, the Turkish and the Tsarist. The regions of Transylvania, Banat, Maramureş and Partium were parts of the Hungarian Kingdom during the Middle Ages, from the 11<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

From 1542 through 1699, Transylvania was the only region in Central and Eastern Europe which held the status of autonomous principality, being compelled to pay a yearly tribute to the Turkish Empire. The Hungarian

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<sup>17</sup> As of the informal statistics, the number of Hungarians (Magyars) in Romania is about 2.3-2.5 millions of inhabitants. Cf. Ellemér Illyés, *National Minorities in Romania: Change in Transylvania*, (Boulder, Colorado; New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), East European Monographs, p. 33. See also Andrew Bell, "The Hungarians in Romania since 1989", in *Nationalities Papers*, vol.24, no. 3, 1996, pp. 492-505. For the official statistics, see the "Romanian statistics of 1995" in *The Educational System in Romania. Tuition in the Languages of National Minorities*, printed by the press of The Romanian Government .

Kingdom was conquered by the Turks at Mohács in 1526; thus the Hungarian political class was restricted to the East, in Transylvania. The autonomous towns and villages of Transylvania needed to secure good communication and understanding among its communities. All groups living in that region were represented in the legislative bodies. The Transylvanian nobility was not divided on linguistic criterion. The documents of the *Transylvanian Diet* of Turda (1557) stipulated that "everyone lives after the law he chooses". In 1568 the *Diet* proclaimed the complete freedom of faith, thus generating a form of tolerance among the four recognized denominations in Transylvania at that time, namely the Unitarian, Calvinist, Catholic and Evangelical.

Banat was an Ottoman province from 1552 to 1716 known under the name of *Sanjak* of Timișoara (*Sanjak* = a subdivision of the Turkish province), and it was included in the Pashalik of Buda. For two centuries, all the above-mentioned regions were included in the Habsburg Empire which became, after 1867, the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Bessarabia was part of the Tsarist Empire, and Wallachia, Moldavia and Dobrudgea were either under the influence of the Ottoman Empire or under its direct rule for five centuries.

Bukovina, another border region of Romania (part of it is included, today in northeastern Romania, and another part, in Ukraine) had a meandering history itself. It had been the meeting point of the Polish, Russian, Austrian, and Romanian political and economic interests for five centuries. Hence the inheritance of a cultural patrimony of great diversity.

Generally speaking, the empires facilitated coexistence of many linguistic and religious communities within the same region. At times, they played the role of arbitrators between two or among more groups whenever the viewpoints regarding their origin, historical right, religion and administration were divergent. The community pluralism was born from the politics of those empires, kingdoms and principalities directly. It is obvious that this pluralism generated emulation in every respect: institutional, financial, commercial, scientific and artistic. The plural history of the area during the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries created the premises of modernization.

Two essential aspects should be noted: firstly, the existence of many different cultures based on different languages – namely multiculturalism; and secondly, the mixture of cultures that generated a civilization with multiple origins –



namely interculturality. In the latter sense, the Romanian-Hungarian coexistence is the consequence of living together over a long time, dating back to the Middle Ages. The same holds true for the Romanian-German, Romanian-Turkish and Romanian-Jewish coexistence. All this set a specific imprint on the contemporary Romanian civilization, generating many similitudes as well as many particular features according to the different regions.

One of the deficiencies of the Romanian educational system has been that it has not questioned the equality of opportunity for education in minority languages. Although the *Education Law of 1995* stipulates that minorities have the right to instruction in their respective mother tongues (See *Appendices 2,3,4*), the County School Inspectorates do not always consider the demographic reality. That is, when institutions plan their curricula they deprive children belonging to minority communities of their right to learn in their mother tongue. Moreover, the need to set up schools with teaching in languages other than the majority's often is ignored. There are cases when School Inspectorates do not respect the children's right to continue their instruction in their mother tongue at the vocational schools or other apprentice schools.

The Roma (Gypsy) children's integration in the school system has not been completely neglected, however it has not been very successful either. Many facts and explanations are put forward today to explain the problem of integration of this minority in schools and society. These include the lack of Roma specialists and, therefore, a lack of a working strategy with these children and the ignorance of the means of communication specific to the Roma community. The integration of the Roma communities continues to be a problem in many Eastern and Central European countries as well. It is not only a social question, but also a cultural one. This aspect, too, must be considered when civic education of the whole population is addressed. The educational curricula must be seriously adjusted in order to eliminate racist voluntary or involuntary ideologies and practices of the trainers and of political and cultural authorities. Virgil Petrescu, the minister of education (1997), stated in an interview that education in Romania, on the whole, suffered from its administrative system, respectively from its excessive centralism<sup>18</sup>. This situation has been perpetuated by the weak organization of the civic society.

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<sup>18</sup> See the interview with Virgil Petrescu, the minister of education, in 22 review, no. 8, issue of February 25, 1997, pp. 8-9.

## ***Obstacles and Solutions in Addressing Intercultural Issues in Schools***

The legacy of the mental reflexes inherited from the extreme right and extreme left totalitarian regimes determined Romania's lagging behind in promoting intercultural oriented education. The traditionalist thinking, the collectivist habitat which causes suspicion, and the tendency to assimilate the individual into the crowd are visible obstacles in promoting interculturality. The idea of sacrifice is advocated in the name of the collective good exclusively. Individualism, on the contrary, is often attached to selfishness. This has its origins in the medieval rural community, and has been well preserved until the present day. A society structured on rural ideals and forms of living rejects the urban rules. The transition from village to city requires passing from one set of values to another, an aspect completely ignored, for instance, by Ceaușescu's dictatorship, which initiated the forced industrialization and the great migration of the village people to the factories in urban milieus. Examples of cultural maladjustment to the urban milieu are the discriminatory attitudes against the old, sick and disabled, against homosexuals and women -- attitudes that lay at the origin of resentments against other linguistic and confessional communities (Hungarian, Roma, Jewish) than the majority.

This is the background of the main factors obstructing the civic education through an intercultural perspective, and hindering the understanding of the role of the pluralist thinking, accepting and respecting diversity and the human rights irrespective of gender, faith, customs, nationality and language. Linguistic discriminations, racist and anti-Semitic behaviors are consequences of a poor civic education. The anti-Hungarian, anti-Semitic and racist articles, studies and books do not encounter any major reaction from the civic society -- another indicator that civic education is in its incipient phase. The Democratic Union of the Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) draw the FUEN's attention (The Federal Union of European Nationalities) to these discriminations through a report presented on the occasion of the congress held in Timișoara on May 15-19, 1996. The lack of a real interest for minorities in Romania has been visible not only as regards the Hungarian minority, but also the German, Roma, Turkish, and Russian-Lippovan ones. The cultural values of these communities are generally ignored. The promotion of their personalities in the country's cultural life is rather casual and when it happens the reason is to prove "political correctness" or

respect for the minority rights. The reference to such individuals/personalities is quite inexistent in Romanian universities and in the Romanian language mass media. Under these circumstances, the Hungarian (Magyar) minority has taken some steps to preserve its culture. Its political body set up a department for cultural and confessional issues and organized a cultural society of the Hungarians in Transylvania: *The Organization of the Intellectual Life of the Hungarians of Romania*.

The official educational system is only partly adapted to European rules; hence its permissivity for chauvinistic manifestations, and anti-Semitic and racial orientations. Even though a few scholars called the attention on the discrepancies between the theory/policy that rules Romanian and Western education, it seems that the Romanian ministry officials have never noticed that the mission of a modern education is to prepare a well educated professional middle class to assume the rules of the society where it lives.

The negligence of the civic education is visible at all educational levels. The trainers and teachers are not themselves satisfactorily prepared to teach the fundamentals of civic education. It is no less true that the gaps in education are due to the lack of financing. During the totalitarian regimes the stress was put on information and indoctrination in the detriment of the individual education; this fact left deep consequences in the mental reflexes of the teachers and students. The superficial approach to interethnic and intercultural topics has visible consequences in civic society, in learning and assuming the human rights, and in establishing a natural communication between two or more communities.

The legal and institutional framework to address the issue of minorities was set-up through the Council for National Minorities, a centralist body without the necessary professional background for promoting inter-community relations.

To conclude, the main obstacles perceived in addressing intercultural education are determined by:

- the attempt to preserve the 19<sup>th</sup> century political ideology promoted by the states of Central and Eastern Europe after 1848, by assuming that the nation and ethnicity are overlapping;
- the lack of culture regarding the rights and obligations of the citizens;
- the conservation of an attitude specific to the close, totalitarian societies;
- the ignorance of minority languages and cultures;
- the minor role of individual initiative;

- the persistence of a centralized political and administrative system;
- the use of stereotypes in textbooks, thus encouraging a nationalist-oriented education;
- the tacit suspicion and inequality of opportunities for the members belonging to minority communities, and for those belonging to mixed families;
- ignorance regarding the Holocaust and World War II; and
- the influence of mass media in creating and perpetuating myths.

Solutions to these obstacles might include:

- the introduction of compulsory multilingual education for all pupils and students in regions with mixed population;
- the elaboration of history, literature, geography, and ethnography textbooks which include information about the culture, traditions, language, and religion of the minority communities living in Romania, as well as data about the convergences between these cultures and the majority one;
- the introduction of laws against any kind of discrimination against minorities;
- granting equal opportunities in professional competition to all the citizens irrespective of their nationality, sex, religion and race;
- the decentralization of the educational system by granting legal opportunities for local educational organizations in minority languages;
- the introduction of new history curriculum in secondary and high schools, to promote the convergent dimension of the cultures and to mould open mindness, responsive to alternatives, giving up the stereotypes which feed chauvinistic, anti-Semitic and racist political speeches;
- the usage of the common cultural heritage to the benefit of the country's culture;
- the teaching of civic education courses at the primary and secondary educational level;

- the dissemination of local intercultural examples in primary schools, high schools, colleges, universities, cultural institutions and the mass media; and
- the promotion of the principles of anti-racist education in schools.

### ***The “Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca: A Way of Addressing Multicultural Education***

Higher education in Hungarian is a controversial topic in Romania’s cultural and political life. The disagreement comes from the kind of education conducted in the East-Central and South-Eastern European states where monoculturally oriented education dominates over the multicultural and/or intercultural. The phenomenon must be seen in relation to the political thinking which developed in terms of ethno-cultural and ethno-differentialist criteria, both of them building the ethno-nationalist identity myth, whence the question of minorities and the policies of subordination, assimilation, exclusion (in extreme cases), or recognition (in lucky cases) have emerged. The Hungarians of Romania – as well as other minorities such as the Germans, Ukrainians, Serbians, Jews, Slovaks, Russians, Turk-Tatars, Roma (Gypsy), Armenians, Italians, Greeks – have their own communities established in different regions in Romania dating back for centuries. Like the Romanian majority, they consider that the region where they live is their native land and wish to be treated as citizens of equal right rather than as a tolerated community of second rank status. The education conducted in minority languages has its incontestable role in the preservation of the pluralist traditions of Transylvania region and of Romania in general.

I shall begin with some statistics concerning the “Babeş-Bolyai” University whose statute became the object of controversy. From 1958 to 1993 the number of students enrolled at the “Babeş-Bolyai” University who studied in Romanian increased from 2,917 (in 1958) to 10,102 (in 1993), and the number of students who attended classes in Hungarian increased from 1,266 to 1,917. During the same period there was a decrease in the number of German students, from 102 to 54, and the number of students belonging to other minorities from 102 to 9<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> See: “The complaint of the Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania (UDMR) containing the objections and requirements in the field of teaching in the languages of Romania’s minorities, with special reference to the Magyar community” in *Documentele*

From 1993 to 2000 the situation changed. In the 1997-1998 academic year there were 76 programs in Romanian, 27 in Hungarian, 8 in German and 3 in international languages. In the same year, the total number of students enrolled at the “Babeş-Bolyai” University was 16,684 (Romanian citizens), out of which 13,578 studied in Romanian, 3005 in Hungarian, 74 in German and 27 in other languages. The day taught courses included 14,768 Romanian citizen students: 11,840 of Romanian nationality, out of which 11,806 studied in Romanian; 2,827 Hungarians, out of which 1,975 studied in Hungarian; 74 Germans, out of which 31 studied in German. Along with these there were 23 Roma, 1 Ukrainian, 1 Italian, 1 Turk, 1 Slovene. The postgraduate studies were attended by 646 students, out of which 506 were Romanians, 135 Hungarians and 5 Germans. Out of the total of 69 programs, 2 ran courses in Hungarian and the rest in Romanian. No subject was taught in German<sup>20</sup>.

In the 2000-2001 academic year, the “Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj served approximately 32,000 students enrolled in 18 departments, comprising 105 undergraduate programs in Romanian, Hungarian and German as well as 123 postgraduate programs. There are also more than 1,200 members in the teaching staff. The “Babeş-Bolyai” University is committed to organizing degree programs taught in Romanian, Hungarian and German. From a total enrollment of 32,000 students, 25,848 are being taught in Romanian, 4,508 in Hungarian, and 690 in German<sup>21</sup>.

The multicultural profile of the University reflects this multilingual foundation that is rooted in the historical and cultural background of the region. The University officially endorses the multicultural approach in its statute and has adopted a multicultural foundation. The document “*Implementation of a Multicultural Structure of the University*” was voted on and accepted by the University Senate in April 1997. It was enacted to promote education on its own terms, strengthening the multicultural profile of the

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UDMR [Documents of the UDMR], 2, (Cluj, 1994), pp.18-23. The restriction concerning the Hungarian language usage in the Romanian higher education until ‘89 has been recorded in the international press, as well. See Janusz Bugajski “The Many Faces of Nationalism” in *Uncaptive Minds*, a journal of information and opinion on Eastern Europe, published by the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe, Washington, vol.8, no.3-4, 1995-96, p.24.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Buletinul Statistic* [Statistical Bulletin], No.5, “Babeş-Bolyai” University-INFO.

<sup>21</sup> About the “Babeş-Bolyai” University. Official Presentation on its World Wide Web (<http://www.ubbcluj.ro>).



university. Out of the 18 departments of the “Babeş-Bolyai” University, currently 13 integrate Hungarian instruction and 9 departments combine German instruction with Romanian. Two departments, namely the Department of Protestant Theology and that of Roman-Catholic Theology offer programs entirely in Hungarian.

The “Babeş-Bolyai” University provides undergraduate programs in three languages as follows: 45 degree programs in Hungarian, 12 degree programs in German, and 86 degree programs in Romanian. Such data analysis reveals an inequality of specializations among the different mother tongues. The numerical proportion criterion was applied to the “Babeş-Bolyai” University exclusively, and the preservation of minority cultures as a whole depending on the percentage of the total population in Romania was not taken into consideration.

The Hungarian and German speaking students are entitled independently to elect their representatives in the teaching boards of their departments and in the University Senate. Each program of study has its own autonomy in establishing the number of teaching positions and the student enrollment for each program. Each department has a Vice-Dean representing the Hungarian minority and coordinating the activity of the Hungarian line of study in that department. Moreover, a Vice-Rector has overall responsibility for all departments. There are twenty Hungarian and German representatives on the administrative boards of the University (Vice-Rectors, Deans, Vice-Deans and heads of departments)<sup>22</sup>.

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Is “Babeş-Bolyai” a multicultural university? Apparently, yes, but in fact it is quite difficult to define it in these terms. Perceived as an outcome of the politics of recognition, the multicultural approach has encountered incredible difficulties in the societies whose democratic practice is still incipient. This is firstly because the monocultural and totalitarian political traditions left deep marks on people’s memory, and secondly because the non-governmental organizations are still insufficient and relatively weak in promoting an articulated view on civic education. As for the state institutions, neither they are prepared for such a tremendous re-consideration, nor have they a credible

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

team of experts to contribute to the appropriation of the necessary information concerning minorities.

However, the desire to implement educational programs taught in more languages and the continuity of education in Romanian and Hungarian exists in the case of the “Babeş-Bolyai” University. There is also the intention to enrich the multi-linguistic program though promoting German as a third instructional language. What can be ascertained from a sociological analysis? The Romanian majority and the Hungarian minority – the two linguistic communities who claim their respective rights in higher education at the “Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj – both plead for the preservation of their respective, culture, tradition, and denomination. Moreover, both communities have discovered their origins, history and archetype through self-definition. Consequently, they adapt their curricula to their respective cultural motivations. The issue, however, in such situations of two or more cultural coexistence, is that of communication and reciprocal transfer of ideas, values, aspirations, working techniques and common socio-professional activities. In this regard, the approach to the issue of coexistence does not seem to have gotten beyond its formal frame. Hence, the risk of conflicts may at any time be activated by ethno-nationalist ideologies which remain at the basis of Transylvania’s cultures and education. Pedagogy under multicultural rather than intercultural emblem, understood as a separation on ethnic background, has as consequence non-recognition or ignorance of the other community’s culture, religion and traditions.

It is true that the university leadership wished to promote each community’s rights through their respective students, faculties and administrative staff. The existence of study-tracks in many languages is in practice and could become fertile in promoting Transylvania’s cultures. All these merits do not obscure the fact that the practice of two or three languages by the entire faculty or by a large group of students remains a future goal. The students enrolled in the Hungarian and German sections speak Romanian, too, beyond their respective mother tongues, while the majority of the Romanian students do not speak -- and are not taught in -- Hungarian or German, as well <sup>23</sup>. On the other hand, there are many cases where students enrolled in Romanian day programs study in English.

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<sup>23</sup> From a total of 32,000 students, 4,508 speak Hungarian and Romanian and 690 German and Romanian. In the case of the 25,000 students that represent the Romanian-speaking majority, multiculturalism is an abstract notion.

The situation is similar with regard to the faculty and staff. A state of suspicion marks the relationship between the two linguistic communities' intelligentsia. Though either apparently or by virtue of political correctness they agree to work together, quite often they ignore the others groups' academic results. This is because either they do not have access to their respective language and culture, or they do not show interest in the diversity that is close by at hand. The academic works published at the "Babeş-Bolyai" University Press support this assessment: under *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai* the 21 series of reviews are published in English, Romanian, French and German, but not in Hungarian.

Last, the university administration is not conducted in two or three languages. The official documents, diplomas and certificates are issued exclusively in Romanian; the rector is elected, with no exception, from the Romanian majority. Since the majority of the faculty in the Senate is Romanian, every decision concerning the instruction in a language other than Romanian could be ignored or rejected. Decisions are at the stake of the Romanian speaking faculty within the department councils including situations when issues regarding the Hungarian or German study tracks are discussed, when it is about hiring or promoting Hungarian or German speaking faculty members or when it is about the continuation or interruption of the Hungarian or German language study tracks. On this basis, the administrative process is in danger of generating inequality and has encountered a few misunderstandings between the two academic communities, also at the political level.

The formal approach to mutual relationship, not only made it possible to consider the multiculturally oriented measures as artificial, but also encouraged the Hungarian community leadership to request setting up a separate university in its mother tongue. The idea of a Hungarian language university shortly became a part of the political program of the Democratic Union of the Hungarians in Romania (UDMR). For the time being the debate has moved to the Romanian Parliament and in central and regional publications, becoming an ideological controversy where the thesis of the linguistic and cultural differentiation is fueled by ethnographic interpretations. As Andrei Roth has remarked, the debates do not have a chance of succeeding as long as they are developed in a nationalist paradigm. He is one of the few faculties of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University who teaches in all three languages: Romanian, Hungarian and German.

In his book *Naționalism sau democratism* [Nationalism or Democratism] (Tîrgu-Mureș/ Marosvásárhely: Pro Europa, 1999), Andrei Roth remarks that there is a chance for a reasonable solution, but for this the discussion has to be transferred from the field of the ethno-nationalist symbols to the real one. Two issues have to be clarified, namely: the social need of higher education in Hungarian; and the concrete way to answer this need by state decision. Roth pleads for finding a solution for Hungarian language education, but not in its “current structural formula”. He argues that there is no need to set up an autonomous state (public) institution for the Hungarian language higher education and that for the lack of students and competent faculty the Hungarian minority would not be able to maintain such a parallel structure. Furthermore, it would divide the present infrastructure of the “Babeș-Bolyai” University at a time when neither the existent one is sufficient nor the state is willing to provide the necessary resources for new investments<sup>24</sup>.

The solutions suggested by professor Roth refer to:

- the acceptance of the Hungarian (as well as German) as equal languages used in the institution’s public and official discourse, so that the university could become really bilingual or trilingual;
- institutional assurance for the minorities to fill – through elections and on a rotating basis – top-leadership positions in the university, not only “deputy” positions;
- the establishment of parallel chairs (departments) in Hungarian for every specialization assuring the right of autonomous decision making;
- the minorities’ must be represented in the university Senate, so that the functioning and development of the departments and chairs in Hungarian and German languages be protected from the discretionary wish of the ethno-national majority.

All these proposals contain rational working hypotheses that, once applied, could create a natural coexistence among the multicultural groups. Andrei Roth refers to the ethno-national principle at the foundation of the cultural identity

<sup>24</sup> *Naționalism sau Democratism*, [Nationalism or Democratism], (Tîrgu-Mureș/ Marosvásárhely: Pro-Europa, 1999), pp. 241-272; see also Victor Neumann, “Intercultural Pedagogy as an Alternative to a Monoculturally Oriented Education: The Case of Romania”, in Kenneth Cushner (ed.), *International Perspectives on Intercultural Education*, (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc, 1998).

and politics of Romania. It should be added, however, that a solution for a multicultural and intercultural educational system – like the one which tried in Cluj – has to highlight the importance of the language and culture much more than either the ethnic criterion or that of the majority-minority proportion. That is, the practice of bi- or tri-lingualism within the “Babeş-Bolyai” University irrespective of pertaining to a particular community seems to be the long run solution that could generate a kind of equity. Only by recognizing that Central and Eastern Europe needs now to redefine the ‘nation’ concept (justified by the old and new territorial, ethno-racial and religious conflicts) will it be able to better understand the importance of overcoming the false association between language and nationality, or between nationality and land.

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Some theoretical explanation of multiculturalism in a comparative perspective is needed. The development of multiculturally oriented higher education at the “Babeş-Bolyai” University is the result of the Western models. The openness for study in many languages is a positive fact in itself, but it should not be put in direct relationship with the ‘ethnic’ criterion, for language does not mean ethnicity. What precisely has not been understood either at the “Babeş-Bolyai” University, or in the theories of some American academics such as of Charles Taylor<sup>25</sup> who have advocated the multiculturalism thesis? Firstly, this type of pedagogy has been practiced in terms of regions, but not of the nation or nation-state, nor in the majority-minority proportions. Secondly, extrapolations cannot be made from other continents to Central and Eastern Europe because of different legacies. The majority-minorities proportion cannot be everywhere the same, and therefore do not follow a rigid model. To impose a so-called “model” can lead to disastrous outcomes, of which the case of the former Yugoslavia is the most obvious example. The interpretation of a multi- and intercultural phenomena must take account the local contexts. This could promote a political and pedagogical philosophy, correlated with the rights of all the linguistic and religious communities, and thus eliminate the possibility of voluntary and involuntary discrimination.

What should be kept in mind as fundamental regarding the concept of ‘regional identity’? There should be granted equal opportunity to each person to become

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<sup>25</sup> Charles Taylor, *The Politics of Recognition, in Multiculturalism. Examining the Politics of Recognition*, edited and introduced by Amy Gutmann, (Princeton University Press, 1994).



co-participant to the activities within the public sphere without limiting racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic criteria, and setting aside the numerical basis of his/her community of origin. Thus, the freedom of option for each person could be kept as far as his/her identification with one or another local or regional group is concerned. In this case one's identification with two linguistic, religious, social-communitarian groups at the same time or successively should be possible. This is how, quite often, a new reference point is born in regions where the cultural horizons (which differ in time) fuse or are in a process of fusion to the benefit of civil society (*societas civilis*), and of a prosperous political and economical administration.

As social and cultural coexistence is possible within a city or a region, it should also be possible among different cities, regions and states. 'Trans-culturality', presumes the right of the equal development of trans-urban, trans-regional, trans-national, and trans-continental relationships. This means that we have to deal with a correlation between educational and philosophical ideas in every integrative process. The 'multiple identity' concept differs from 'multiculturalism' and 'trans-culturality' because it emphasizes a denial of the theory of absolute values. The 'multiple-identity' concept stresses that nothing justifies operating hierarchically and in terms of an exclusive basis through 'ethnicity', 'race', 'denomination', 'region' and 'nation-state' basis. If by 'trans-culturality' Harvey Siegel<sup>26</sup> understood "ideals which transcend individual cultures", then by 'multiple identities' I mean the similarity of human values, their common origin, the possibility of assuming a plurality of cultures through claiming more than one cultural identity at a meantime.

Regions like Transylvania – where Cluj is situated with its "Babeş-Bolyai" University – reflect to such a trans-cultural approach to identity. The case of Pristina University in Kosovo and respectively its role in promoting segregation proceeding from a false multicultural idea is a signal of the mutations that could appear in the practical life. Hence there is need for a comparative perspective on the evolution of the values around which the individual's personality was formed and which guide a certain society. As rather complementary than as an alternative to multiculturalism, the concept of 'multiple identities' provides a

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<sup>26</sup> Harvey Siegel, "Multiculturalism and the Possibility of Trans-cultural Educational and Philosophical Ideals", in *The Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, vol.74, no. 289, 1999, pp. 387-409.



way out of the frame of the ethno-cultural and differential (ethno-nationalist) prejudices to which political thinking is still tributary.

The numeric principle generously invoked by “Babeş-Bolyai” University in their presentation materials only summarizes the thesis of multiculturalism, without taking into consideration the realities. A normal coexistence of many groups does not necessarily mean a definition on an ethno-nationalist basis, either of the regions under discussion or of the educational institutions. Therefore, an alternative to the monoculturally oriented education has to be found in a natural way by professing the multicultural pedagogy from which permanent reference to the more profound senses of trans-culturality and inter-culturality must not lack.

The most interesting and attractive forms of the coexistence of many cultural identities could be found in border regions. They preserve the interest in “Otherness” and enable borrowing values from different cultures. In these areas particularly, civic education includes the principles of interculturality and trans-culturality.

### ***The Interculturality of the Banat Region: an Argument to Overcome the Controversies Based on Ethno-Cultural Criteria***

What are the most convincing reference points in present day Romania for teaching civic education and the human rights through an intercultural perspective? To answer this question I have chosen Banat, a border region located in western Romania, with multilingual and pluri-communitarian background that might offer possible examples in the above mentioned sense.

This area shows more convergence than any other in Central and South-eastern Europe; it shows also how the coexistence of many cultures and different languages has been possible. The phenomenon – defined today in the term of interculturality – not only did not cause major conflicts, but was able to stimulate the development of a community where the interests in the name of civilization have been placed above ethnicity, or beyond closed communities. The inter- and multicultural features which have survived until now cannot be idealized; now as in the past the merit of their preservation belongs to its inhabitants rather than to the policies of the authorities such as the nationalist policy of the last decades that concerned the very existence of diversities all over Romania.

The examples in the next paragraphs might be found in other regions as well. The outcomes of the intellectual life and of civilization belonging to different linguistic groups have been turned into a common patrimony through their cohabitation. The acceptance of the idea that this patrimony has multiple identities contributes to a better understanding of both history and the contemporary world. Generally, the cultures in the border regions of a country are plural ones. They cannot be found completely in a single language. Thus the Banat region cannot be studied through the fruits of Romanian culture alone.

Situated in the western extremity of Romania, Banat is an area of multiple dialogues. Its intercultural make-up is the result of the cohabitation of several populations: Romanians, Germans, Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, Jews, Bulgarians, Slovaks, Bohemians, Gypsies (Roma) and Turks — it is the result of confessional encounters between Christian Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, Calvinists, Jews and Moslems (Appendices 6-9).

The society which has developed in Banat from the eighteenth century onwards is the product of an exchange of opinions and material values. How can this phenomenon be explained? Ideas did not remain at an abstract level; they were developed in the course of an education in which multilingualism, the assimilation of traditions and customs, the interaction of religions, and the alliances of cultural aspirations with religion were fundamental. Crucial to this process was the coalescence of different groups on the basis of mutual interests. This is manifest in the appearance of mixed families, both ethnically and denominationally. Interculturalism developed in the form of a double or multiple cultural inheritances.

Banat was a model of peaceful coexistence from 1800 through 1938, an example of mutual understanding and intercultural and inter-confessional relations<sup>27</sup> (see Appendices 6 - 9). Despite a number of significant demographic dislocations due to the discriminatory measures imposed by Ceaușescu's nationalist-communist regime, a sense of civic society was retained in the above-mentioned area. This took place in defiance of xenophobic, chauvinistic and anti-Semitic provocations. The region's mentality continues to be tolerant

<sup>27</sup> István Bibó, *A kelet-európai kissállamok nyomorúsága* [The Misery of the Small States of Eastern Europe n.n.] in *Öszegyűjtött munkái* [Complete Works], vol.1, (Munich: Az Európai Protesztáns Magyar Szabadegyletem - Bern, 1981), pp. 202-252. The French edition: *Misère des petits Etats d'Europe de l'Est*, translated from Hungarian by Kassai György (Paris: Editions l'Harmattan, 1986).

today, despite the fact that its ethnic configuration has completely changed (see Appendices 10-14). Multilingualism continues to characterize around 20-30% of the population<sup>28</sup>.

The use of two, three or even four languages in the Banat region is an uncommon phenomenon in Europe. The multilingualism of the people living in this part of Romania dates back one and a half, or in some cases even two, centuries. The wide dissemination of this phenomenon can be observed in all historical periods, despite the tendency of the national culture and language to extend its influence to the detriment of minority cultures. The need to communicate and to understand their cultural heritage, alongside economic interests, was the reason for learning the languages of neighboring communities. The region's multilingualism could be described as the common inheritance of every inhabitant. Remarkably, none of the ethnic or religious groups viewed multilingualism as a threat. Rather, it was perceived as a way to bring people together. The educational dimension of this phenomenon has been well understood by the region's inhabitants, resulting in a cultural heritage that now belongs equally to all

In societies of this kind, diverse by virtue of their very genesis, recognition of the role of the intercultural education is an important step<sup>29</sup>. In Banat multilingualism has been supported by the school and the family. Romanian is the dominant language, being the mother tongue of the majority; in most primary and secondary schools teaching is in Romanian. The school curriculum stipulates the study also of English, French, and German. Teaching conducted in German, Hungarian, Serbian, Slovakian, and Bulgarian is maintained as a local tradition. Education was set up in Romany, at the request, for the first time, of the Roma (Gypsy) minority. From a linguistic point of view diversity -- which is a part and parcel of the culture of the Banat region -- generated as a complementary aspect the desire to establish secondary schools that provide instruction in English and French. In Timișoara, for

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<sup>28</sup> According to *Anuarul statistic al României* [Romanian Statistical Yearbook], (Bucharest, 1994).

<sup>29</sup> Pieter Batelaan, "Education interculturelle en Europe". Work in manuscript, consulted through the author's goodwill in 1994.

instance, after the collapse of communism, the “Shakespeare” and the “Jean Louis Calderon” high schools have been established<sup>30</sup>.

The practice of multilingualism -- the result of the social interaction between the Romanian majority and the Magyar/Hungarian, German, Serb, Bulgarian, Jewish, Slovak and Roma/Gypsy minorities -- is closely linked to the historical process of modernization; rather than being imposed from outside, diversity and multiple identities have emerged naturally.

Despite difficulties and the absence of links between bureaucracy and mainstream politics, on the one hand, and the expert analysis of the multiethnic and multilingual configuration, on the other, there are still a few schools in Banat that provide education in minority languages. In both Timișoara and Arad there are German-language primary schools and high schools; while in Lugoj, Reșița and in the German-populated villages, there are modules that provide education in German (see Appendix 5). Experience of cultural interaction between Germans, Magyars and Romanians has given rise to an interesting phenomenon: the desire of many Romanian and Magyar native speaking students to study in high schools that provide instruction in German. As a result of the emigration of Germans and Jews, eighty percent of the students in these schools have Romanian as their mother tongue.

Teaching in the Hungarian language has a tradition dating back for more than 150 years. There are primary and secondary schools or classes that provide education in Hungarian in Timișoara, Arad, and Lugoj, as well as in other towns and villages in Banat region (see Appendix 5). The decline in the number of Hungarian speakers is the result of assimilation and the rise of the proportion of mixed families in which the Romanian language prevails. It is also the outcome of the political pressure from the nationalist-communist regime in the 1980s, the impact of which has still been perceived after 1989.

The Serb schools meet the needs of over 40,000 local inhabitants. Primary schools are run in every village with a Serb or mixed population, while the “Dositej Obradović” high school in Timișoara provides continuity in Serb language study (see Appendix 5).

The Slovakian primary and high school in Nădlac serves the Slovak minority. They offer a basis for cultural interactions between Romanians and Slovaks

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<sup>30</sup> These two schools teach in English, and respectively in French.

which has evident benefit in view of the European ideals of integration. The Bulgarians find themselves in a similar situation.

Multilingual education in Banat is able to function today due to a particular life-style and mode of civilization. Nevertheless, the active support -- both material and spiritual -- of the authorities is essential. This could be based on a number of considerations: new generations of specialists could be formed more quickly to develop the region; and it could also facilitate relationships with Central and Western Europe and with Balkans. This could mean the beginning of a deep transformation of mentality and behavior, at present hindered by the legacy of previous totalitarian regimes and economic backwardness. The population's efforts indicate that Banat is an East-Central European region where the emergence of an open society can be readily envisaged<sup>31</sup>.

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As previously mentioned the present population of Banat can be divided roughly into two major categories: those who belong to the region by birth and ancestry and those who migrated from other regions of Romania during the last six decades. Most social analysts of the region have observed, however, that in many cases newcomers have embraced the region's specific multicultural *modus vivendi*. Those able to accept the local religious, linguistic and cultural diversity have adopted gradually the peculiarities of the everyday life-style from the region's "indigenous" inhabitants. They adopted the style of house construction, the local cuisine, and the manner of celebrating cultural traditions. Newcomers have assimilated even the folkloric patrimony of Banat and many expressions from the German, Hungarian and Serbian languages. Even more interesting for the sociologists and historians of mentalities is the fact that many of these migrants have learned some Hungarian and German. A few of them have preferred mixed marriages; others have developed relationships with Hungarians and Serbs from Banat. The development of such relationships was based on economic exchanges. The businessmen in Banat -- in the process of reacquiring the "universal" rules of trade -- were the first to realize the importance of economic transactions with other minorities. Even

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<sup>31</sup> For the situation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Die Projektirte Banaterbahn von politischen, militärischen und volkswirtschaftlichen Standpunkte beleuchtet, (Vienna: L.W. Seidel u.Sohn, 1870), p.1.



the craftsmen, whose businesses were threatened by Ceaușescu's totalitarian regime, are recovering not only their economic, but their social role.

The Romanian majority originating in Banat continues to have good relations with the minorities. Until 1989 xenophobic and nationalist ideologies were quite rare in the region due to the middle class that understood the multicultural identity of the region. Nationalist extremism has its origin in both an inferiority complex and in misguided notions of superiority. Twenty-five years of nationalist-communist dictatorship (1965-1989) and the interwar ethno-nationalist ideology promoted by the centralist political system also left its mark on education. Information concerning linguistic and religious minorities deliberately was expunged from textbooks; the teaching of modern languages fell into disuse; and every attempt was made to impose a single culture – that of the majority – and to ignore diversity. The authorities went so far as to prohibit the public use of the regions' name in order to obscure its geographical, ethnographic, linguistic, and religious variety<sup>32</sup>. Some families living in Banat (fewer than in other regions of Romania) were influenced by populist and extremist ideology in the course of a veritable crusade against civism, culture, religion and diversity. Communication and contacts between the Germans, Hungarians, and Serbs of Banat and people in Germany, Hungary and Serbia respectively, contributed to maintaining the flow of information between these countries and Romania. During the crisis the proximity of the former Yugoslavia and Hungary constituted an opening for diversity. Until 1989 the world could be watched through TV channels broadcast from Budapest, Belgrade and Novi Sad. Social relations between majority and the ethnic minorities could not be pigeonholed in accord with a particular ideology, for reality always contradicts mere assertion, however credible arguments were brought forward to back it up<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> In this sense see the textbooks written between 1975-1990. The new history textbook entitled *Istoria Românilor* [*History of Romanians*], was elaborated by the Ministry of National Education for high schools. This textbook does not contain significant modifications, but retains the style of the previous history textbook. Significantly, many chapters cover national propaganda, ignoring the regional history and the multiple cultural identities.

<sup>33</sup> A slightly different type of relationship between the majority and minorities could be seen for the Roma/Gypsy minority. This is due, on the one hand, to the lack of civic education on the part of this minority and, on the other, to the absence of real awareness of the Roma/Gypsy's traditions by the rest of population. Their labeling in the local press does not



The remarkable relations among the minorities of Banat have always been supported by the region's widespread multi-lingualism. Magyars/Hungarians also speak Romanian and German; the Serbs and Bulgarians have always been bilingual, the Romanian language has been adopted as a second language in families. The Jews have been generally multilingual and the Slovak minority in Nădlac has spoken both Romanian and Hungarian as well as Slovakian. Social relations among minorities have been multifarious and have taken the form of cultural cooperation, of recognition and respect for the traditions of other regions. Their extensive linguistic resources have enabled the local cultural minorities to acquire a thorough understanding of the particular inheritance of the Banat region. They have been largely sensitive to such ideals as the equality of all citizens. Germans and Hungarians come together under the auspices of the Calvinist, Lutheran and Catholic Churches; the latter Church also brings together the small Slovakian and Bulgarian minorities. Cultural differences and mentalities which have been the product of centuries of living together may be perceived in every aspect of the public life of the minorities<sup>34</sup>.

A deep sense of democracy persists in Banat due to the pluralism generated from the bottom to the top by a multicultural society. To what extent does the present population of Banat itself comprehend the role and importance of multi-lingualism and interculturalism and what efforts is it prepared to make to safeguard the future? The particular nature of the region could be endangered and its well-being and stability greatly enhanced if the educational system is not fundamentally reformed.

Nationalism continues to play an important role in Romanian politics. Many political scientists – such as Andrei Marga (minister of education between 1997-2000) – assert that nationalism has interposed itself between communism and democracy, leading to stagnation and promoting reactionary tendencies of the conservative social groups.

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promote relations of mutual tolerance. This is, probably, the most delicate subject concerning the relationship between majority and minorities in Banat, in Romania and in other countries or regions in Eastern Europe. There is need for sociological studies to provide the necessary database for creating civic education programs for the Roma/Gypsy population.

<sup>34</sup> See the statistics of Department of Minorities within the Ministry of Culture of Romania, on the minorities' cultural organizations; there are 37,000 Swabs; 124,000 Hungarians; 22,000 Serbs; 7,000 Croats; 9000 Slovaks; 1,500 Bulgarians; 1,800 Jews; 10,000 Ukrainians.

“These groups stress the Latin origin of the Romanian people, but Latin language is studied less in Romania than in non-Latin countries. They proclaim their adherence to Orthodoxy, but they have not generated a serious religious culture; they proclaim a sense of justice as their chief morale virtue, but until 1989 Romania was ruled by the most sinister dictatorship from Europe in the last decades. Moreover, the emigration of Jews and Germans cannot be viewed separately from the nationalist influence on the government policy. Economic decline and falling living standards led to uncertainty and restrictions for minorities”<sup>35</sup>.

### ***The Educational Significance of Interculturalism***

Education could play a major role to solve the problems of nationalism. The main advantage of the historical model provided by the Banat is its intercultural and trans-cultural nature. The recognition of the minorities' right to develop their respective cultures and languages within the borders of a nation state depends largely on the attitudes of the majority. Here education -- both at school and at home -- can have a considerable influence. The plurilingual approaches which have emerged historically in Banat have been strongly combated by nationalist-communist groups in Romania. The European integration of Romania will depend on the flexibility of the regional population, on its abilities to set a good example of communication among diversity.

The interculturality of Banat region and the civic education promoted by school and professional associations could be a starting point and an outstanding example for the younger generation. Why is this the case? Different cultural information sources tend to emphasize the positive role of social interaction. The bilingual or trilingual education of the minorities in Banat has resulted in a diversity of cultural viewpoints. An education system that uses the past to construct a modern European man would be extremely effective; and when one talks about Europe, one has in mind not East and West, but mutual relations and symbiosis<sup>36</sup>. The multiple identities of Banat

<sup>35</sup> Andrei Marga, *Filosofia unificării europene* (Philosophy of European Unification n.n) (Cluj: Apostrof, 1995), p. 219.

<sup>36</sup> Questions concerning a common European identity and trans-national communication, were discussed at a meeting organized by Warsaw University on September 28-30, 1995 on

may contribute -- as long as demagogy and forced imposition are abandoned -- to rebuilding the bridges between Eastern Europe and the West.

The rediscovery of the intercultural history of Romanian regions like the Banat, Maramureş, Partium, Transylvania and Bukovina has a deep importance. It is a matter of replacing a factional and a partial standpoint with a liberal and open one. It is a matter of generating spiritual support consonant with social realities, with the multi-linguistic and multi-confessional nature of the country. It is a matter of recovering a *modus vivendi* that is concordant with the traditions of the region on the basis of diversity and tolerance.

The development of civic society very much depends on education. Not only the population of Banat, but also of the neighboring regions could be approached from an intercultural perspective. The examples offered by the historical background could stimulate the development of the trans-cultural relationships among people living in Romania.

Banat and Transylvania might serve as good starting points for the historical reconciliation between Romania and Hungary, not only on the basis of everyday relations, but also as a model of contemporary trans-national communication. The history of cultural relations between these two nations should be studied as a foundation to support and develop regional tolerance.

Perhaps the best chance for the European integration of the former communist states is to build upon aspects of their own regional past which point in the direction of a pluralist identity and democratic development. In Romania, the regions of Banat, Partium, Maramureş, Bukovina, Dobrugea and even

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the theme "*What is Europe? Revisited*". In the workshop entitled "The History of the Idea of Europe" I raised the problem of including the history of Central and Southeastern Europe in a "History of Europe" course planned for the Open University system. The subject has been a continuing focus of intellectual discussions. Ten years ago, Hugh Seton Watson raised some major questions concerning the European Community. One of these questions was the possibility of an economic and political movement convergent with the common cultural sense of Europe. Starting from the multiple historical experiences he went on to conceptualize the term "Europe". This is very necessary since the fall of the Iron Curtain. See H. Seton Watson, "Where is Europe? From Mystique to Politique", in *Encounter*, July/August 1985, vol. LXV, No.2. For another evaluation of the term see Geert Hofstede, "Images of Europe", in *The Netherlands Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 30, August 1994, no.1, pp. 65-82.

historical Transylvania are border regions. This is why it could act as a mediating agent for the development and deepening of social modernization. Obviously, the legacy of the communist regime can only be overcome after great efforts. The functioning of a pluralist society is deeply dependent on the educational reform where civic education is addressed through an intercultural perspective.

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