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**ARMÂN / AROMANIAN ETHNIC GROUP SURVIVAL IN THE IDENTITY
CONTEXT OF UNITED EUROPE**

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Today, we are living a time of changes. The actual humanity's crisis is not only an economic one, but rather a system crisis that will change traditional values and also the entire concept of „identity”.

The old paradigm of understanding the world seems now insufficient to explain all the present events. It is needed a different mindset, a different pattern of relationships between people and nations, a different way to define identity.

If today the competition and the narrow individualism are still considered very important social-economic values that represent the key for development and progress in many areas of human life, it is likely that in the near future will be speaking about cooperation, collaboration, solidarity and eventually, about a different understanding of identity.

Europe is living a good time for the historical truth to make his way into the light. Opportunity to assert the identity in European open society based on the values and norms of liberal democracy is a chance that not repeats many times in history and the Aromanians/Armâns find themselves in a social and historic situation to conceive a pattern of integration within an united, pluralist and democratic Europe built on the dialogue's values and on political principles of open societies.

Europe does not mean to cancel the differences, but to fully open ones to each others and together to the universal values of spirit, preserving also the identity. This is why the idea of an identity structured on a language, traditions and distinguished nation awareness must remain valid in present and future Europe.

Although it has never been unimportant, the idea of an ethnic group affiliation is necessary today for stopping a superficial standardization of Europe's citizens.

Those states were Aromanians /Armâns or others communities that need support for their ethnic survival lives must understand that supporting them is nothing but a contribution to the development of a modern society where spirit of tolerance, diversity, respect and cooperation between all his citizens are considered fundamental values.

Aromanian /Armân people never knew the superior form of organization of a state and that lead to an inadequate knowledge of their history and identity. This deficiency of knowledge can be observed not only in other's opinions about this ethnic group but unfortunately, also among Aromanians /Armâns themselves, many of them having a mystified representation of their history.

The historical-academic knowledge of different states has been unfair with this ethnic group because the Aromanians had never been asked how they feel themselves - a different people with an own identity or part of a nation. Nevertheless, deep down, the Aromanians /Armâns knew how to remain Aromanians, how to preserve their own identity and in the same time, to share the values and aspirations of all peoples among they lived.

The Aromanian's /Armân's history has never confronted such accelerated process of ethnic assimilation. In the past, this process was crude and violent, and Aromanians /Armâns have found the resources and strength to oppose it.

Today, the assimilation is subtle and hard to confront; many times is hidden behind the idea that refusing the values of a paradigm that standardize the consciences means to reject the evolution, the progress, being excessively conservative and that leads to a much to easy abnegation of own identity values.

However, today the Aromanians /Armâns are a community confronting the delicate issue of their status recognition; they are about to lose their language, traditions - their identity and they are subject to an increased denationalization.

So, recognizing them an institutional frame meant to assure them a proper expression of their own identity values is a real necessity imposed by the actual political, social and cultural context.

What are the chances for the Aromanians / Armâns to assure their ethnic survival face of cultural and identity challenges promoted by all the civilizations among they live today?

On the contemporaneous existence, the Aromanians /Armâns are forced to understand that their continuity cannot be assured just spontaneous, without defining their existential priorities and without additional measures for the preservation and the promotion of their identity. Otherwise, they will share the sad faith of those nations we find today only in history's pages. This is why the Aromanians needs institutions to offer them protection.

On the actual juridical context, in order to respond as faithful to this very complex problem, each country must consider **the facts, the social and cultural reality** showing that there are ethnic groups removed unjustified from the benefit of the legal measures of protection that are vital to keep their identity.

Speaking about Aromanian's /Armân's identity and about the concrete possibilities to promote their identity, by default it is necessary to bring into discussion their status because it has a direct and overwhelming influence regarding the assertion of their identity.

Today, the status of the Aromanians /Armâns from Romania, Albania, Greece, Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria and Serbia vary, depending on the specific legislation of each country. Generally, the Aromanians **are assimilated to the national majority** of these countries with the **only exception** of the Republic of Macedonia where this ethnic group has been recognized as a **nationality** since the Constitution adopted in 1991¹.

Currently, **in Romania**, the juridical and political situation of the Aromanians / Armâns is closely related to the status of this group and legally to the concept of "national minority" and the laws governing this area.

The legal framework does not sufficiently correspond to the cultural, social and political developments, so it is necessary that new legislative measures be taken, in

¹ Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia adopted on 17 November 1991 entered into force on 20th November 1991

order to protect the existence and the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of all ethnic groups and also to assure fully equality of rights and equal chances of identity preservation, so that no ethnic group be discriminated compared to others.

Our national legislation recognize special measures of protection only for those ethnic groups that are represented in Council of National Minorities and in Romanian Parliament. Because the Aromanians /Armâns don't have any of these representations, the only way they can affirm and promote their identity is to be recognized as a **national minority**.

And it is important to mention that the concept of „**national minority**” is defined only by the electoral legislation as „**that ethnicity represented in Council of National Minorities**”².

But in fact, this definition exceeds the electoral area, having a **general character with application in any area of social and cultural life**.

So, in Romania are recognized as national minorities only those ethnic groups represented in Council of National Minorities.

Establishing such definition, these legal provisions not only that relates recognition of a minority to the representation within a consultative organism of the Government – Council of National Minorities (founded by Government Decision no. 589 / 2001³), but in the same time, **creates unjustified discriminations, violating the principles of equality and non-discrimination before the law**⁴.

Through the Government Decision no. 589 / 2001 has been founded the Council of National Minorities as a consultative organism of the Government, without legal personality, in order to assure the relationships with legally constituted organizations of the citizens belonging to national minorities and to make proposals to improve the legal framework in this area.

² Law no. 373/2004 adopted on 24 September 2004 regarding the elections of Chamber of Deputies and Senate – article 4; Law nr. 35/2008 for the elections of Chamber of Deputies and Senate – article 2.16 and 2.29; Law no. 67/2004 regarding the elections of the local administrative authorities – article 7.

³ Government Decision no. 589/2001 was adopted on 21 June 2001 and entered into force on 6 July 2001 after the publishing on Official Monitor of Romania no. 365/06.07.2011. It has been completed through Government Decision no. 181 from 08 March 2011

⁴ Romanian Constitution adopted on 21 November 1991 revised by the Law no. 429/2003 published on Official Monitor no. 758 from 29 October 2003 approved by national referendum.

Article number two (2) of the above mentioned decision states that this organism „is composed of three representatives of every organization of the citizens belonging to the ***national minorities represented in Romanian Parliament***”.

Through his content, this article produce an unjustified and unfounded discrimination between those persons that are belonging to a national minority with parliamentary representation and those persons not having such a representation.

This way, **it is violated the constitutional principle of fully equality before the law** because with no legal basis, **the ethnic groups not-represented in Romanian Parliament are excluded from the benefit of those protective measures recognized to the other ethnic groups.**

Practically, in the absence of a special law governing the national minorities status, their definition is based on a political consent by which have been accepted as “national minority” those communities that have formed legal organizations which, through their participation in parliamentary elections, managed to get a seat in Parliament.

In the same time, the legal provisions on electoral field establish the possibility to participate on the parliamentary elections **only** for the organizations of the persons belonging to national minorities **represented in Parliament** and for those organizations represented in **Council of National Minorities**.

Basically, **it is violated the right of every minority ethnic group existing *de facto* to be *de jure* recognized as a national minority**: on one hand, the Council of National Minorities is composed only by those organizations represented in Parliament and on the other hand, on the parliamentary elections can participate (in order to achieve a parliamentary representation) only those organizations represented in Council of National Minorities.

Therefore, it is practically impossible for an organization to be recognized as belonging to a national minority, of this statute benefiting only those organizations already represented in Parliament and Council of National Minorities. And this is an obvious **infringement of essential values in a democratic society characterized by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance and equality.**

From this perspective, must be underlined that this negation of the national minority status restricts the Aromanian’s / Armân’s right to benefit of all the protective measures recognized for the persons belonging to national minorities.

On these conditions, it is clear that the Aromanians cannot protect their identity without an institutional support and without their recognition as belonging to a national minority.

Without an institutional support, all ethnic communities are in danger to be assimilated by majority. And understanding of this reality is able to create the awareness that all the components parts of a whole have their own importance. The disappearance of ones of these parts will lead to the annihilation of a specific and vital process for the existence and functioning of the whole.

Only the freedom and the support for all communities for the promotion of their own identity will make humanity to work in harmony and equilibrium.

The only chance for the ethnic survival of the Aromanians / Armâns is to accept the modernity with all its benefits, to be open in fully tolerance, love and respect for the others and, in the same time, to assume without retaining their own identity and the duty to ensure the identity's maintenance and promotion.

Analyzing how the Aromanians / Armâns report themselves between being a good citizen of a country and at the same time be a member of a minority community with an identity different from the majority, we note that there is no adversity report, but on a contrary, it is **a lesson of reciprocal tolerance teaching us to overcome the differences and to focus on the fundamental and universal values of humanity.**

For all these reasons, it is very important the manner in which the Aromanian / Armân issue it's treated and solved, because it can also provide a way to understand and solve the very identity issue in Europe.

The success in construction of the European multinational society depends in part of the success in solving the Aromanian / Armân issue.

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