



Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)  
Union Fédéraliste des Communautés Ethniques Européennes (UFCE)  
Föderalistische Union Europäischer Volksgruppen e. V. (FUEV)  
Федералистский Союз Европейских Национальных Меньшинств

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Place **Skopie / Macedonia**  
Event **Visit of FUEN President Romedi Arquint  
to the Vlachs/Aromanians**  
Date **2005/12/15-17**

The purpose of the visit was to get direct informations about the situation of the Aromanians in Macedonia and to start the preparation of a seminar of all Aromanian Communities in the different states which will be held at the 9th – 12th of June 2006 in Sofia.

I had contacts with representatives of the Union for Culture of the Aromanians in Macedonia (UCAM, full member of the FUEN) and with representatives of 3 ministerys and memebers of the Faculty of Philology in Skopje

### **The Vlachs / Aromanians in Macedonia**

#### General remarks

Macedonia has been involved in major political problems due to the conflict between the ethnic Albanians end the ethnic Macedonians. The parties have now found a not very stable peacefull coexistence. The decision of the EU to admit Macedonia as a member candidate is combined with an improvement of the economic situation, which could be an important factor for the stablisation of the young democratic state.

The political and the economic background should allow to improve the situation of the Aromanians living in Macedonia. It's at the time to implement the Recommandation 1333 of the Parliamentary Assembly (1997), to the Framework Convention on the Protection of national Minorities, the Copenhagen Criteria and to put in practice the basic elements necessary for a efficient promotion of the endangered language and culture of the Aromanians.

The aromanian community as a part of the aromanian people is the only minority community living in Macedonia without kin'state. The Aromanian community has experienced a long periode of assimilation. The awariness of the population is still rather weak. But there is a progress to be seen. According to the last census the aromanian population has increased from 7 000 to 9 000. In reality there are more than 80 000.

The Aromanians are divided into three groups (from which two are under the greek and romanian influence, and the third one is independent) which makes it difficult to find a common strategy. It's up to them to end the often personal quarrels and to develop minimal common elements for a consistent strategy.

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## 1. Acknowledgment of the Aromanians as a minority

### 1.1 Constitution

In the Republic of Macedonia, the Aromanians are recognized in the Constitution as all the other minorities as “a part of the Aromanian people”.

### 1.2 Consultation arrangements

Committee for Inter-community Relations. There are, elected by the Assembly, 19 members, 14 Macedonian and Albanian representatives and only one from among the Vlachs, Turks, Serbs Roma, Bosniacs respectively. The composition is not very adapted for taking care of the problems of the smaller minority communities. The same is to be said of the Committee for Inter-ethnic Relations of the Assembly of the republic of Macedonia.

## 2. The sphere of the education and science

I had the opportunity to visit the first school class (since the classes were stopped 5-6 years ago) in Aromanian language in Skopje and was impressed by the goodwill of the director of the school, the parents and the teacher. But: The same has no status at all beside the fact that it is in use for 7-8 years. So far published are only one reading-book (1997) and only one manual (1999). These books are out of print; the pupils have to use only copies. For the following classes no textbook exists. The pupils are bored with the same book every year.

It is not allowed performing classes besides the fact that there was a request – last year in Veles and Kicevo, this year with delay was approved in Skopje and we don't know if the requests are approved for Veles and Struga. There is no active initiative of the state or the local municipalities to an improvement of the situation.

The mayor problem is that there isn't any coordinated and consolidated education for the teachers in Aromanian language. The last education cours for aromanian teachers has been organized for a week in winter one year ago. In some of the few schools the qualification for aromanian teaching by the teachers seems not been given. According to our partners some aromainan teachers are “expressly” employed according to their degrees, but in places where there are not Aromanians, so they can't perform classes in aromanian language.

Manuals about the Aromanians and their literature, history, folklore or children magazines for the highscool level don't exist neither. In official text-books in macedonian language there aren't lessons about Aromanians (History, Literature, Folklore).

Mr Dragan Nedeljkovic, Director for the developpement and Promotion of Education in Langauges of Minorities mentioned the lack of money and difficulties inside of the Ministries.

## 3. The sphere of culture

The same problems have been mentioned by Ms Melpomeni Korneti, Deputy Minister at the Ministry of culture. This ministry recently shortened the only financial contribution for a cultural review. While the former government approved 120.000 den. (2000 EU) per year, the present government approves only 80.000 (1.300 EU). For 2005 the Ministry of Finance approved the funds even in November that is on the end on the year, and for the UCAM it approved only 60.000 den (1000 EU) which is symbolic amount.

Facts mentioned by the representatives of the Aromanians:

The Aromanians are not included in other programmes that are financed by the Ministry or organs that exist in the Ministry for Culture – UNESCO Commission, Department for Sustainable Development of the Culture etc. In Macedonia there is not



one Aromanian Home of Culture, and because of the needs there should be such an institution in Skopje, Shtip, Bitola, Struga and Gevgelija (for the Meglen Aromanians).

In Macedonia, the official theatres-having in mind the one for children as well- are not obliged to perform or organise theatre shows on aromanian language.

In Macedonia none aromanian folkloric and artistic organization is financed from the Ministry of Culture.

In Macedonia does not exist any cultural monument of the Aromanians which is under protection. Cultural monuments are not shown as part of the aromanian culture and they are shown only as Macedonian heritage (churches, cultural personalities, architecture in Krushevo, Bitola, Ohrid, Shtip etc.). In Macedonia does not exist cultural manifestation which is financed by the Ministry for Culture.

#### **4. University -Faculty of Filology “Blaze Konesky” Skopje**

I assisted a constructive debate at the Faculty in presence of the Dean, Prof. Maxim Karanfilovski and other members of the Faculty. A year ago, on the master’s desk for Macedonian language was brought a decision for opening “a Lectorate for aromanian language” and the classes are obligatory for the students from Balkan studies and comparative literature. There have been very emotional debates about the linguistic status of the aromanian language and the problem of the qualifications which are necessary to install such a lectorat. Prof. Karanfilovsky declared open to this question which would be very important for the prestige, the preservation and promotion of the awariness of the aromanian language and culture. He proposed to continue the discussion with representatives of the Faculty of Filology “Blaze Koneski”, Ministry of Education and Science and Union for Culture of the Aromanians from Macedonia as a initiator of the idea for opening studies on the Faculty of Filology, under the arbitrary of FUEN, a thing that was conferred on that meeting, and FUEN accepted to arbitrate.

There is a total lack of higher studies, in research and history of Aromanians, the aromanian language, literature and Arts.

#### **5. Media TV programmes on Macedonian Radio and Television (MRTV)**

Compared with other minority communities in Europe Macedonian Television MTV and Macedonian Radio MR are generous towards the minority communities. The situation is often not satisfying at the local radiostations.

Programmes on MTV – three times a week with 30 minutes and once a month with one hour and Programmes on Macedonia Radio with 30 minutes a day. Employed persons: MTV – 3 and MR – 2, which is very little number and there isn’t any kind of instruction of new working forces.

On Radio Shtip there is a programme in aromanian language – without any kind of status, but as activity of the members of the Union for Culture of the Vlachs from Macedonia. Radio Krushevo takes over and retransmit the programme from the Macedonian Radio. The programme of meglen-aromanina language in Gevgelija does’nt work for several years because the editor hasn’t any status there at all.

#### **6. International obligations**

6.1 The Framework Agreement from Ohrid and The Parliamentary Committee for the Relations Between the Communities In the process of making the Framework Agreement from Ohrid and beside all the requests from the UCAM and other organizations, the Aromanians weren’t consulted. The Ohrid Agreement was centred on the solution finding for the Albanian community, while the Aromanians are put into more submitted position and are denied especially with the acceptance of the famous 20%.

The Parliamentary Committee is a body which is obligatory according to the Framework Ohrid Agreement. But in these three years it held only several meetings that were more for albanian cause. Only once on the day agenda in the Parliament there was raised the question about the “National Day of the Aromanians – 23 of May” in the Law for Holidays but nothing was accomplished because there wasn’t shown a little bit of interest.

## 6.2 The Framework Convention on Protection of national minorities

Macedonia has ratified the Framework Convention on the Protection of national minorities. There has not been an efficient participation of the Aromanian community in the implementation of the Framework Convention.

## 6.3. European Charter of the minority or regional languages

I had an interesting and constructive meeting with Ms Sanja Krstevska-Zografska, Head of Council of Europe and Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We discussed the next steps to be made for the improvement of the situation of the national minorities and the peoples without kin'state like the Aromanians. We agreed on the importance of the ratification of the European Charter on minority or regional languages. Macedonia supports the initiative of FUEN to organize a seminar in Macedonia in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Charter and the Council of Europe on this issue. The date could be the first 3 months of 2006.

### **Proposals:**

Generally: The information, coordination and participation of the Aromanians in the definition of the

- strategy and in the discussions about the actual needs is rather weak or non-existent. According to the International Agreements on all levels – education, University, Culture the Aromanian representatives should be consulted and it should be guaranteed an effective participation of the minority communities at all levels of negotiation. This is a crucial step towards a civil society and the political establishment of a multinational state.
- To start the efforts to the ratification of the European Charter on regional or minority languages by Macedonia. The Charter is a cultural document centred on the linguistic and cultural needs of the minority communities. FUEN will organize an information seminar in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the Government of Macedonia. FUEN will contact the named institutions at the beginning of the next year.
- Special attention is to pay to the Aromanian community, the only one without a kin'state.
- To develop a strategy together with the Aromanian community to improve the situation of the education of the Aromanian language at all levels of public schools
- To achieve an active support of all state and local authorities for the implementation of education in Aromanian language at the primary school and guaranteeing a qualified education
- Publication of textbooks and manuals for the primary schools and for the Highschool
- To install a qualified formation for the teachers
- Support for an edition of a children magazine and children books.
- A generous financial support of the few editions and activities of the Aromanian communities.

To found, for the beginning, a Home of Aromanian Culture in Skopje, and then, according to possibilities in other cities too.

To realize a lectorat of the Aromanian language at the faculty of Philology in Skopje, accessible for all students of Balkan studies and comparative literature. The Faculty is interested to continue the preparatory works on this issue, initiated by the Union for Culture of the Aromanians from Macedonia, which should be one of the participants to the discussions together with the Faculty of Philology and the Ministry of Education and Science, and FUEN will arbitrate and coordinate for overcoming of this question and will ask FUEN to cooperate at the next step where the details of the theme should be discussed. The dynamic and the term for beginning and finishing of the discussions and the arbitrage: January – May, 2006.

## International Aromanian seminar June 2006 in Sofia.

FUEN is organizing next year from the 9th – 12th of June the sixth seminar on peoples without kin'state in Sofia. The theme will be "Transborder cooperation". We'll present and discuss the examples of the Sami transborder Cooperation and the Friesisk one. The other minority communities will present their achievements and difficulties.

The second part of the seminar is centred on the transborder cultural cooperation of the aromanian people. Representatives of Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and Rumania are invited. We'll have presentations of the non-governmental aromanian communities and the presentation of the governmental representatives. Representatives of the Council of Europe will evaluate the follow up of the Recommendation 1333/1997.



The aim ist to establish a non governmental cultural aromanian Umbrella organization wich should develop a common strategy

FUEN President Romedi Arqint (second from left) had a positiv reaction of the Unia ti cultura-a Armanjlor dit Machidunii and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Skopje.

and measures for an intensive cooperation and coordination of the activities between the Aromanians. The states in wich aromanian communities live are invited to do the same. The aromanian community and the representatives of the government of Bulgaria have already signaled to host the seminar.

I had a positiv reaction of the UCAM and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Skopje, too.