

Minority Education and Integration, Democratic Value of the Albanian Society

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Abstract

After the fall of the communist regimes throughout the Eastern Europe, the problem of rights of the ethnic, racial, religious and national minorities, constituted one of the main concerns of the international community. This fact, has striven and still does to resolve such problems by democratic means, not only from the juridical point of view, but also by creating the necessary conditions to make possible the real implementation of the respective laws and agreements. These minorities serve as a bridge between different peoples and countries, that is why the policies pursued towards them by the respective governments must be very careful, and of European and contemporary standards.

The pressure of the integrative European processes is rapidly changing the old concepts about monolingualism and bilingualism, about the nation-states, making way to the new concepts of a peaceful co-existence between different peoples and their cultures.

In Albania, as in all the Balkan countries, we witness a mosaic of different cultures, a result of the languages and cultures of the different minorities. The Albanian society, as a democratic society, has always tried to do its best to integrate these minorities, respecting all their fundamental rights.

KEYWORDS : minority, integration, balkans, government, rights.

Introduction

Protecting and caring about the national minorities rights; their ethnic, racial and religious ones has long been of concern to the international communities since the fall of the communist regime at the Eastern European countries. The western democratic countries, tried not only to establish a democratic culture at all spheres of life, at the political and social ones, but also to lay the foundations of protecting and guaranteeing the minorities rights.

After World War I, many countries which wanted to join the membership of The League of Nations, had to sign the recognition of national or racial minorities which were within their borders to enjoy the same rights the majority had. Thus, at the declaration of 1921 it was asked for.

“a) Equality to law; b) the use of mother tongue at private and commercial accounts, at business

issues, at publications, public meetings and courts as well; c) the right of profiting from charities, religious and educational institutions; d) the districts where minorities made up considerable number of population, teaching at the public primary schools should be held in their mother tongue and an equal amount of the central and local budget should be given to minorities for educational, religious and charity reasons” (CAH, 1925).

In 1948 at “The universal Declaration of the Human Rights”, it was stated that the recognition and respect of dignity and the equal human rights of all members of human family made up the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world (Memushaj, 2001). Day by day the minority rights were all sanctioned among other documents of this organization, worth mentioning are “The international convention on civil and political rights” 1996 and “The declaration on the rights of the persons” who belong to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities” approved by Assembly the General in 1992.

At a great number of papers approved by OSCE, EU and EC, the protection of minority rights has been one of the major issues. One of the most important documents is Helsinki Charter, 1975, where “the national minority issue or the regional culture one” is highlighted. It is quoted:

“Bearing in mind the contribution that the national minorities or the regional cultures could provide together with these countries at different aspects of culture, these country should try to facilitate their spread, when there are such minorities and cultures within their territory, considering the legal interests of their members” (Memushaj, 2001).

This document also emphasizes that measures should be taken to protect and encourage the situation to preserve the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities. As well as in other documents like “The document of Copenhagen meeting on human dimension of OSCE” 1990, “The frame-Convention on Protecting the National Minorities” 1995, “The universal declaration of linguistic rights” 1996, it is stated the protection of minorities, including their human and linguistic rights, as well.

Being a member of the UNO since 1955, Albania has already ratified the main treaties concerning the protection of human rights of this organization as well as other international organizations like OSCE, EC etc. Among the most important ones we could mention: “The universal declaration of human rights” 1984, “The international convention of eliminating all forms of racial discrimination” 1969, “The international agreement on economic, social and cultural rights”,1976, “The final act of Helsinki Conference”, 1975, “The declaration of Copenhagen”, 1990, “The Charter of Paris for a new Europe”, 1990, “The document of Moscow Conference”, 1991, “The frame-Convention on Protecting the National Minorities”, 1995 etc.

Our country has always been famous for its coexistence in peace and harmony among national minorities and other ones. Each minority during this coexistence has demonstrated its originality over the years, which in return is respected and has been given the chance to inherit its continuity generation by generation.

The Albanian society and its minorities

But which is the ethnic composition of Albania? Like many other Balkan countries, Albania has not escaped the mixture of population. Some part of it makes up the minorities. Among the Albanian territory there live the Greek and Macedon minorities which have won the status of “national minority” as well as two other minorities being considered as linguistic ones; vllahs and gypsies. Some registrations of population have been conducted in Albania where different results are given about the minorities. The first main criteria of registration have been the ethnic and linguistic ones

while later the linguistic criterion was not considered at all minorities which brought up the neglect of two linguistic communities. Nevertheless, based on statistics of 1990, the ethnic composition of population in Albania is: in 1989 the Albanians comprised of 98 % of the population while the other nationalities (Greeks, Macedons, Serbs, Montenegrins) occupied only 2 % (Bici, 2001). At this statistical year-book, we are not given any information about the other two minorities, vllahs and gypsies. A. Bërxoli at his work "Minorities in Albania" (Bërxolli, 2005) analyses in details the statistic data and the possible growth of the minorities in Albania. This information has also been put forth at his other work "The geographic Atlas of the Albanian population", Tirana 2003. Another new registration based on fair and democratic criterion could finalize an accurate number of the ethnic composition of population in Albania.

Based on international documents about minority rights, the Albanian governments have worked out their own educational policies, which have always been well advised, aiming at soothing integration of minorities in all aspects of the Albanian social life. The legal framework about minorities at the Republic of Albania includes a considerable number of legal provisions being provided at the Constitution, the Penal Code, the Penal Procedure, the normal acts of the Council of Ministers and the Conventions being ratified by the Albanian Assembly. Since its foundation, the Albanian state has worked assiduously to fulfill the tasks resulting from the declaration of 1921, which was finally signed.

Among all minority rights being exposed at many national and international documents, we would like to emphasize the minority right of protecting and enriching their mother tongue.

Among the most important documents on this issue are "The European Charter on regional languages or the minority ones" 1995 and "The universal declaration of linguistic rights" 1996. Compiling such documents was made possible by the intention to protect the regional or minority languages of Europe, some of which, considering the difficulties they are facing, are threatened with extinction. The Greek and Macedon minorities are recognized by the Albanian state as "national minorities" enjoying all the minority rights sanctioned under the Constitution and the legislation of this country. Thus, the law on educational pre-university system, it is stated "Persons who belong to national minorities, are given the possibility to learn and be taught in their mother tongue, to learn their history and culture within the framework of the teaching program (GORA, 1995). Thus, the minorities enjoying the statute of "national minority" use their mother tongue at school and other cultural and religious activities. The lesson at these schools is held on a special program where their mother tongue prevails in most parts of it. Teaching Albanian begins at the second school year and continues as a special subject during all the grades of the primary school. At the secondary school, the subjects being held in Albanian get more and more year by year but maintaining the proportions with the other mother tongue subjects. We are going to introduce the table of the teaching program at the minorities schools (Greek/Macedon) as well as the percentage of subjects taught in mother tongue and the Albanian language. (Refer to Table on page 6)

Despite the fact that the programs being the same for the Greek and Macedon minorities, we must accept that the Greek language enjoys a higher statute than the Macedon one because of the higher percentage the Greek population has. Also, after 1990, the number of high schools for minority pupils was increased finalizing it with the

university “Eqrem Çabej” where the department of “The Greek language, literature and civilization” is part and parcel of it. Television programs in Greek are still shown at different channels. These minorities, maintaining their main typical features, have already integrated themselves equally into the Albanian society.

Regarding Vllah community, it has been recognized as a linguistic minority after 1990. This community continues to preserve its language and culture within its family framework. During 1921-1939, in Albania, except for the other minority schools, under the care of Romanian state there continued to exist Aromanian schools where the lesson was taught in Romanian (Kyçyku, 1999). Later the law of nationalizing the private schools in Albania brought forward a lot of problems between the Albanian-Romanian relationships regarding the schools, which later were closed and reopened many times. After 1940, all Aromanian schools were closed. The Romanian schools in Albania could not survive because they sounded strange to the Vllah of Albania. Their language was Aromanian not Romanian. Matilda Karaxhiu, a Romanian academic, when dealing with the native Aromanian statute that live in Balkan countries, holds the view that they are in minority compared with the majority population of the country where they live. This quality gives them rights like those provided to all minorities around the world, but the Aromanian themselves should demand and win the rights they deserve. According to her, Romania was influencing for an education in its literal Romanian language, at a time when the Aromanian children were deprived of their mother tongue and little knew about their history, their culture and their personality (Karaxhiu, 1997). After World War II, the Vllah minority, which was not recognized by the Albanian state as a special minority, was being educated and is still educated at the public Albanian schools. Today they are entirely integrated into the political, social and economic life of the Albanian society.

Another community of the Albanian population is the gypsy minority which is known as a linguistic one. The gypsy minority is coping with a more difficult economic and social situation, which is characterized with a low standard of living, homeless and an abnormal environment to bring up their children.

At such situations, the Albanian government, having realized the situation that the gypsy minority in Albania is coping with, in 2003 ([http:// www.osce/sq/albania/21233](http://www.osce/sq/albania/21233)) occupied itself in drafting a strategy to improve the living conditions of this minority through real programs and policies to soothe away poverty, to include them in political life, preserving and evolving their ethnic identity etc. To fulfill this project, the gypsy minority was considered an important cooperative partnership. In this treaty, the greater attention is showed in determining the long and short- termed ways which would lead to a rapid integration of this community into the Albanian society. Among them we should bring up: the gypsy children education, supporting them with scholarships and other programs, educating them at professional schools, ad hoc programs for integrating the gypsy women, sensationalizing the whole society by means of media etc.

We would like to point out the education of gypsy children starting at the early pre-school stage. This education could be realized by getting to know the number of children who have to go to kindergartens; getting to know the centers being frequented by gypsy children; the need to sensationalize the gypsy community to register their children at kindergartens; reconstructing the centers which are not in good conditions at the locations where this community lives; building new centers where actually there is no one according to the dense or sparse gypsy children; the need to teach the Albanian

language at the high level of the pre-school in order to enable them to get used to being taught in their first grade at school, as well as appointing the most experienced teachers having taken first the opinion of the community.

A series of measures have been taken to continue their education starting from their first grade and onwards. Worth mentioning are: making evident the number of pupils who are supposed to go to school; making public the centers being frequented by gypsy children; the need to sensitize the gypsy community to register their children at schools, which will be continuously followed by taking punishment measures against the families which do not allow their children to go to school; appointing the most experienced teachers by qualifying and motivating them but at the same time stimulating the pupils by giving them free school text books of the primary and secondary levels (grades I-XII), as well as organizing activities at school and out of it: intensifying the work with gypsy parents to convince them have a better attitude towards school as well as equipping the schools with the necessary didactic materials to make the lesson attractive. Following such measures and other ones over courses of time, all Albanian society, conscious of its many difficulties, is having its try at fully integrating this community.

Conclusions

To sum up, we could say that minorities in Albania enjoy all the rights the whole population does. The Albanian state not only preserves these rights legally, but in compliance with real conditions of Albania is trying to provide possibilities to reaching that goal. As mentioned above, Albania has always been famous for its coexistence in peace and harmony among national minorities and other ones. The legal framework about minorities includes a considerable number of legal provisions. Since its foundation, the Albanian state has worked assiduously to fulfill the tasks resulting from the declaration of 1921, which was finally signed. Each minority during this coexistence has demonstrated its originality which is respected and has been given the chance to inherit its continuity generation by generation.

Nr.	SUBJECT	Grade								
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
01	Greek mother tongue	8/7	6	5	4	4	4	4	4	3
02	Albanian language and literature	0/2	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
03	Foreign language (English)	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2
04	Mathematics	5	5	5	4	4al	4al	4al	4al	4al
05	Natural science	-	-	2	3	2	-	-	-	-
06	Physics	-	-	-	-	-	1al	2al	2al	2al
07	Chemistry	-	-	-	-	-	-	1al	1al	2al
08	Biology and Health education	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2
09	Motherland	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
10	History	-	-	-	1	-	2	2	2	2al
11	Geography	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2al
12	Native history (Greek)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
13	Native Geography (Greek)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
14	Social education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
15	Figurative education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-
16	Music education	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
17	Technology ability	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-
18	Physical training	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
19	Free to choose subject	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
20	Informatics							1al	1al	1al

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