

THE AROMANIANS IN ALBANIA

Shadow Report

**standing for the 5th to 8th Periodic Reports of Albania,
submitted under article 9
of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial
Discrimination Convention
(CERD/C/ALB/5-8)**

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AROMUNËT E SHQIPËRIË

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I. Demographic, economic, social and cultural characteristics of Aromanians

A. Population

1. Internationally known as “Aromanians” or as “Vlachs”¹, this group of populations is autochthonous within the present border of Albania, as well as in FYROM, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia.
2. Being part of the Oriental Romanic linguistic group, the Aromanians’ mother tongue is scientifically proved to be a dialect of Romanian language, along with Daco-Romanian, Istro-Romanian and Megleno-Romanian, since the Aromanians are descendents of ancient Thracian populations subjected to the Romanization process and mixed with Latin-speaker colonists, during the Roman rule in Balkans.
3. In a number varying from 992² to 200,000³ (according to official sources), the Aromanians are traditionally located mainly in three areas of Albanian territory:
 - Myzëqeja Plains – close to the Adriatic Sea,
 - Pogradec-Korçë region near to Macedonian and Greek border,
 - Gjirokastër-Sarandë region near to the Greek border.

Other estimations go from 200,000 by the English scholar Tom Winniffrith (1999), to 139,065, the Demographic Atlas of Albania (2003), according to a research performed by Geographical Studies Centre of the Albanian Science Academy with a German institute between 2000 – 2002.

4. Though in direct geographical continuity with Aromanian masses in Greece and FYROM, those of Albania belong only to the Farsherot, Myzaqiar and Moscopolitan speaks, but not to Pindean and Gramostean ones.

B. Social, economic and cultural features

5. The Myzëqeja Aromanian group was traditionally involved with agricultural, opposed to the other two (mainly herdsmen). A notably craftsmanship and masonry was attributed to the urban Aromanians, as well as trade abilities.
6. Nowadays, the Aromanians largely abandoned their traditional shepherd occupations and the nomadic life, and relocated in towns, as a result of internal migration in Albania.
7. Many of them work in Greece and are subject to an intense process of ethnic assimilation supported by financial, cultural, educational, religious, political and diplomatic instruments: pensions, work permit, residence permit, and children religious camps for those declaring themselves as “Hellenic *homogeneikos*” /Hellenic people outside Greece.
8. During the post-communist transition period, descendants from transhumant families started to revitalize a private, and this time sedentary, economy using livestock and dairy competencies again.

¹ Derived from their self-designation as *Aromân* or *Rromân* (or *Armân* or *Rrămăñ*), similar to Northern Romanian group of population. Gustav Weigand (1895:vii) was the first to propose „Aromune“ as an ethnonym for international scientific usage, deduced from the emic designation „Aromân.“

Albanians call them *Arumun*, *Vlleh*, *Çoban* or *Leatzifatzi*, (similar to the Serbian designation *Tzintzar* which has an offensive touch and is derived from the sound of their language).

² Figure produced in 2007 by National Statistics Institute of Albania (INSTAT) in cooperation with Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Republic of Albania, Direction of Minority (Acc. Second report submitted by Albania pursuant to article 25, paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities – Annexes, ACFC/SR/II(2007)004, received on 18 May 2007).

³ Figure produced in 2011 by the State Committee on Minorities, a body under the prime/minister of Albania.

Educational and cultural features

- Education system

9. During the migration and urbanization processes of recent times, many young Aromanians lost their ethnic and linguistic identity. During the communist period, the Aromanian idiom was not passed on to the next generation by the feeling of being despised.

10. After the falling of the communist regime (1991), Aromanian idiom had never been included in the public educational curriculum.

Currently there is no public education for Aromanian children in their mother tongue.

There is an isolated attempt to establish education in Aromanian in the Diviaka town in private, but free kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. The whole project is financially and logistically supported by Romania and is developed by Cultural Association "Aromanians of Albania" and the local teacher Koçi Janko.

On empirical basis, some attempts were made to teach summer classes for Aromanian children in several villages. Still the outcome is not clear and there are doubts about the rate of participation.

- Culture

11. The only church offering regular religious service in Aromanian is St. Sotir of Korçë (established in 1995 with financial aid of Romania), with Dhimitraq Veriga as a priest.

In 2008, another Aromanian church was rebuilt in Lëngë, near Pogradec, also with funds from Romanian government.

12. There are no public television or radio stations broadcasting fully or partially in Aromanian. Sporadic attempts were made to broadcast programs on Aromanian topics, but with unsatisfactory impact to the audience, while the feeling of inclusiveness is completely missing. "Zik-Zak" and other similar TV and radio broadcast are credited with very low ratings.

Up to now, remain irrelevant the attempts to establish private radio stations with Aromanian programs.

13. Since 2002, the Department for Romanians Abroad regularly sponsors the bilingual monthly magazine "Frățilia"/"Vëllazëria" (*The Fraternity*), with Jani Gusho as redactor-in-chief and Robert Çollaku as director.

C. An overview of the protection and promotion of human rights

- Constitutional and legal framework

14. *The Fifth to Eight Periodic Reports submitted by Albania* fails to report a paramount gap in equal treatment for the ethnic minorities:

The Constitution of Albania refers only to **national minorities**⁴, thus all relevant legislation for minority rights is drafted only to mention the national minorities (Greeks, Macedonians, Serbo-Montenegrins).

⁴ Article 20

1. Persons who belong to **national minorities** exercise in full equality before the law the human rights and freedoms.
2. They have the right to freely express, without prohibition or compulsion, their ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic belonging. They have the right to preserve and develop it, to study and to be taught in

15. But, according to certain Albanian official documents, in Albania two other **ethno-linguistic minorities** are also recognized,: the Aromanians and the Roma.

Comparing to the ethnic majority and to national minorities, the evident internal inconsistency of the legal provisions exposes the Aromanians and Roma to a double discrimination in terms of educational, cultural and civil registration rights, according to *Second Opinion on Albania of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention For The Protection Of National Minorities (Acfc/Op/II(2008)003, adopted on 29 May 2008)*.

16. Based on Article 20 of the Constitution, to the Aromanians (and Roma – the ethno-linguistic minorities) are implicitly denied some of the fundamental rights which for the national minorities are observed.

In this respect, the text of *The Fifth to Eight Periodic Reports submitted by Albania* is auto-eloquent, by stipulating in its Paragraph 93 that:

“These two provisions place the sign of equality concerning the exercise of rights and freedoms between the **Albanian nationals, national minorities**, foreign nationals and stateless persons. Keeping to the same line of thought, this equality sign is placed even by article 3 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Albania.”

17. Strangely enough to note that while none of the Albanian Reports approaches the “issue of Article 20”, other Paragraphs of the Constitution are presented extensively.

This issue of the Article 20 is the source of any other kind of discrimination, and all judicial demarches based on the Anti-discrimination Law⁵ are overruled by the aforementioned Article making the Anti-discrimination Law ineffective with respect to the protection of ethno-linguistic minorities’ protection (Article 3, Para 1; Article 6, Para 1 of the Anti-discrimination Law).

18. Moreover, the Albanian official documents contradict themselves when defining the status of Aromanians, as in the *First Report Submitted By Albania Pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ACFC/SR(2001)005, 26 iulie 2001)*:

- The Roma and **Aromanians are recognized and respected as linguistic minorities**. (p. 11)
- Among **the national minorities in Albania are also the Aromanians** (mostly known as Vlachs). (p. 16)

- Implementation/enforcement of international norms of human rights (and Recommendation No. 27)

19. More than three years passed since the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities issued its *2nd Opinion on Albania (ACFC/OP/II (2008)003, 29 May 2008)*, and nothing can summarize better the present state of play then a quotation from the 7th Paragraph of the document: “it is disappointing to find that these promising commitments [of Albanian authorities] towards protection remain largely declaratory and find it difficult to be put into practice.”

Though the Government program 2005 – 2009 stipulated that “the Government commits itself to abide by and achieve the highest standards in respecting the rights of all the ethnic minorities: Greek, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Roma, Egyptian and Aromanian, in full

their mother tongue, as well as unite in organizations and societies for the protection of their interests and identity.

⁵ The Law No. 10 221 / February 4th, 2010, For Protection Against Discrimination.

compliance with the European Charter on Human Rights and the European Charter on Minorities Rights”.

In real terms: the Advisory Committee made more than 50 recommendations, out of which 32 core recommendations (self-identification and census, territorial restrictions, legislative and institutional framework, media, education, freedom of religion, religious organisations and restitution of property) are certainly not addressed yet by the Albanian state. This does not mean that all the other recommendations are already fulfilled.

20. With respect to Aromanian ethno-linguistic minority, none of the recommendations was considered by Albanian authorities:

- Education in minority languages is at present subject to unnecessarily complex regulations. Aromanians have asked for the opening of classes in minority language. In some instances, the opening of classes in minority language has been denied because of the reliance by the authorities on the ethnic affiliation as stated in birth certificates to determine the number of pupils belonging to national minorities.
- The Albanian government continues to place Aromanians in categories other than that of national minorities. They are defined as “ethno-linguistic” minority (the term used in the State Report), notwithstanding the demands of those concerned, who have explicitly informed the authorities of their objection to this label – which, in their view, reduces their identity to a primarily linguistic component – and expressed their desire to be recognised as national minorities on the same basis as Greeks, Macedonians and Serbo-Montenegrians.
- Apart from a few projects, most Aromanian cultural activities, especially in relation to language teaching, have been launched thanks to outside funding, in particular from Romania. Aromanian representatives are disappointed that the Albanian government has not provided any support for their culture and language, which they believe are under threat to die out.
- In many respects minority publications depend on funding from abroad for their survival. The situation is particularly critical in respect of the Aromanian minority, which is reliant on financial support from Romania in order to continue distributing its publications.
- The Aromanian minority does not enjoy any regular public radio or television coverage.
- Aromanians face difficulties in relation to the return of church assets, including land surrounding church property.

21. The Third Report submitted by Albania pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ACFC/SR/III(2011)001, 10th January 2011) is nothing but the very proof that Albanian authorities are deeply stuck in the denial of a normal status for Aromanians: intentional misuse of terms and concepts (minority vs. national minority; ethno-linguistic minority vs ethno-lingual minority); replacement of the internationally agreed terminology (Aromanians/Vlachs vs. “Arumanians” & “Wallachians”); grave distortion of the real state of affairs concerning the ethnic minorities in Albania, by misleading use of facts (examples only relevant for national minorities are presented as counting for all ethnic minorities). An in-depth analysis of the Third Report is presented in Annexe 2.

The Third Report stands only for a cosmetic and diverting presentation of ethnic realities in Albania. It also failed to include contributions from the minorities’ organizations, as it was the case with the Second Report.

D. The reporting process at the national level (and Recommendation No. 27)

22. The State Minority Committee (SMC) does not have a balanced representation and the Aromanian community is highly concerned that its interests will not be considered in the future Framework Law on National Minorities taking into consideration that the SCM is in charge to draft this law.

The so-called Vlach representative to the SMC has no legitimacy due to the fact he was appointed without the agreement of the Aromanian community and is an active member of several organizations affiliated with other ethnic minorities in Albania (the Greek national minority).

In spite of the fact that the members of this community identify themselves using the word "Aromanians", the term is not used and displayed on the web-site of the State Minority Committee.

23. The Section for Human Rights, Minorities and Reporting – in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is far from fulfilling its role as an equidistant official interlocutor for the representatives of minority associations. It rather obstructs this dialogue and provides the distorted arguments against the restoration of the legitimate status of Aromanians in Albania as a national minority.

24. In spite of all evidences provided by the Cultural Association „Aromanians of Albania” (linguistic and ethnic affiliation to Romanian cultural heritage; religious and educational services in their mother tongue supported by Romania benefited from in the past and mutual public political statements about Romania as their kin-state), the status of national minority was denied for Aromanians.

Representatives of the Section for Human Rights, Minorities and Reporting openly declared that the only way for Aromanians to achieve their status as a national minority is to sue the Government.

II. Implementation/enforcement of the provisions of articles 1 – 7 of the Convention

Article 2

25. *The Fifth to Eight Periodic Reports submitted by Albania* provides statistical data only for national minorities, as a confirmation for the official stance of Albanian authorities on Aromanians and Roma as second rate minorities.

26. The lack of statistics concerning the Aromanians directly leads to the lack of institutional policies meant to address the specific cultural and educational needs of this minority.

Article 5

Civil rights – Right to education (and Recommendation No. 16)

27. Currently there is no public education for Aromanian children in their mother tongue.

2 gymnasiums and other 31 primary schools were run by the Aromanian community for different periods between 1883 (Pljasë) and 1944 (Korçë, Shpëskë), along with 10 churches, until the communist regime came to power in Albania.

The schools for Aromanians on the present territory of Albania have been opened long before the formation of the modern Albanian state in 1912. All of them were sponsored by the Kingdom of Romania.

The new-born Albania inherited this *status quo* from the Otoman Empire, where Aromanians were recognized as *millet* since 1905⁶ and were granted the same administrative, religious and educational organization rights, enjoyed by all the other non-Muslim nationalities recognized by the Empire.

This set of good practices the Albanian state enacted with respect to the Aromanians was only interrupted during World War One and the Italian occupation.

Between October 1927 and 1935, education in the mother tongue for the Aromanians from Albania was held also in the state schools. And that represents a direct recognition by the Albanian authorities of the minority-kinship state relationships, pertaining to the Aromanians and Romania.

The General Education Directorate from Albania on March 23rd 1926 issued a Circular Letter No. 519, published in the Albanian Official Monitor No, 24, of March 29th 1926, whereby “all those were notified, who had served before as Romanian language teachers, as well as all those who can speak this language and wish to be employed as teachers wherever the Romanian people resides in large numbers; accordingly, all these people should submit their applications, and their study certificates to the education inspectorate of the constituency they were ascribed to, so that they could be considered for the next school year, and be appointed teachers of Romanian, a language that in the future will be taught concurrently with the official language of the state.”⁷

For an extended presentation of Aromanian Schools in Albania, please see the Annex 3.

28. On July 18th 2011, The European Commission again encouraged to remove obstacles to minority language education and provide for non-discriminatory treatment to members of all minorities⁸.

III. Response to the Committee’s recommendations concerning the initial to the fourth periodic reports under the Convention

Recommendation No. 12 (CERD/C/63/CO/1)

29. There is a continuous pressure jointly coming from the political class (parliamentarians and party leaders), the public opinion (journalists, former parliamentarians) and a series of government institutions (The Higher Council of Justice via its vice-president, Kreshnik Spahiu) for the removal of questions from the Census Formulary related to ethnic, linguistic and religious affiliation.

30. The Law on Population Census 2011, as it was approved by the Parliament, stipulates fines and other penalties for those who declare false data in the Questionnaire.

These stipulations contradict the self-declaration and anonymity principles and will result in the inhibition of Aromanians’ will to freely declare their ethnic and mother tongue affiliation, because their ethnic origin can not be documented. Only the national minorities were allowed to declare their ethnic origin in the civil register office (not anymore since May 2011).

31. On July 18th 2011, The European Commission restated the importance of collecting updated statistical data on all minorities, in order to develop appropriate policies and

⁶ The Irade (Decree) Sultan Abdul Hamid the 2nd issued on May the 22nd 1905.

⁷ Acc. to the Romanian Foreign Ministry Archives, the Albanian Fund, vol. 15/1926, Aromanian Schools.

⁸ Common Position of the European Union, Third Meeting of the Eu-Albania Stabilisation And Association Council, p. 13 (Brussels, 18 July 2011)

recalled the importance of conducting the census in line with internationally recognised standards ensuring full respect of the principle of free self-identification⁹.

Recommendations No. 14 and No. 15

32. If the only distinction between national and ethno-linguistic minorities is that the former have a native land, which is not the case for the latter, than Aromanians and Roma would be granted the same rights like any national minority in Albania: media, public education and culture in their mother tongue. It is not the case.

33. Added to this, Albanian authorities continuously ignore the statements made by Cultural Association "Aromanians of Albania" on the historical, cultural and linguistic kinship between Aromanians and Romania.

34. Most recently, the Aromanians' International Congress (Tirana, 18th of November 2009) condemned the mystifications by means of which the Aromanians' history and identity are distorted in the Aromanians' "home countries" in the Balkan region, with the clear purpose of denying Aromanians the status of national minority.

The delegates protested against the schemes and loopholes in interpreting the legislation whereby the authorities in the Aromanians' "home countries" in the Balkan region strive to deny Aromanians their national minority status and the ensuing rights.

Delegates at the Congress reiterated the fact that Aromanians are part of the Romanian identity and they demanded from the Romanian state:

- To assume full responsibility it has towards Romanian identity in the Balkans, in keeping with the continuity, and in the spirit of a valuable historic tradition, as it can be seen the in the European and Romanian diplomatic documents;
- To express publicly, through actions with a diplomatic and international purpose, its interest for the Aromanians from outside the borders of Romania, in its capacity of a kin-state for those Aromanians;
- To continue and step up efforts to support the Aromanians/rrămăni/vlachs around the world, so that they can benefit, in the Aromanians' "home countries" across the Balkan region, from the rights and freedoms stipulated by the European specialized documents, so that the Aromanians can preserve, enhance and assert their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious entity.

35. Alongside Romania's additional efforts to support the Aromanian community, efforts are required, coming from Albanian Government with a view to preserving our own identity.

36. In this respect, during his official visit in Albania in Tirana, on 8 June 2010,, the Romanian President, H.E. Traian Băsescu, had requested to his Albanian counterpart, H.E. Bamir Topi, to grant the national minority status to the Aromanians in Albania.

37. On July 18th 2011, The European Commission encouraged Albania to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the FCNM, in particular as regards reconsidering the distinction between national and ethno-linguistic minorities with a view to ensure that there is no differentiated treatment between defined categories of minorities and as regards facilitating the use of minority languages¹⁰.

⁹ Common Position of the European Union, Third Meeting of the Eu-Albania Stabilisation And Association Council, p. 13 (Brussels, 18 July 2011)

¹⁰ Common Position of the European Union, Third Meeting of the Eu-Albania Stabilisation And Association Council, p. 13 (Brussels, 18 July 2011)

Recommendation No. 19

38. The Fifth to Eight Periodic Reports submitted by Albania refers only to national minorities.

Conclusion

39. In Albania there is a total lack of will, at all levels of the public institutions, to righteously recognize Aromanians as a national minority.

On this topic, the international relevant organizations are misled by flawed arguments and distorted information.

UN Forum on Minority Issues - "Minorities and Effective Political Participation" - Geneva 12-13 Nov. 2009

Elvis Toci, vice-president for foreign relations of the Cultural Association „Aromanians of Albania”:

THE CASE OF AROMANIANS IN ALBANIA

Propably the case of Aromanians in Albania is an unknown issue for many of you: This is a minority living in Albania for centuries which still preserves its culture, religion and language they consider as a dialect of the Romanian language.

But nowadays, globalization of the world economy makes it a difficult task for fragile minorities to preserve their language and traditions.

The support from the countries we are part of is a necessity as much as the advise of international organizations.

Our political participation is important to make our claims heard and our rights respected, but this is not possible without some conditions that Albanian government has to fulfill.

That is why we are here to make our voice listened and we consider that this Honorable Forum should encourage Albania to adopt an anti-discrimination law and a framework law on national minorities, and to implement measures on minority languages.

Our political participation can't become a real asset without the real access to media for all categories of minorities: which is an unknown phenomenon for the Albanian fragile democracy.

The importance of the accurate statistics on the size of all minorities within Albania: this can help on territorial engagement of political efforts to support needs of all minorities.

The Albanian government should develop a genuine policy on supporting minorities because we consider the existence of Aromanian minority in Albania as an added value to the Albanian society and not as a threat.

The Albanian government continues to place the Aromanians in categories other than that of national minority. We are defined as ethno-linguistic minority (this term is used in state report) notwithstanding the demand of those concerned who have explicitly informed the authorities of our objection to this label which in our view, reduces our identity to a primarily linguistic component.

We ask the Albanian authorities to reconsider their distinction between national and ethno-linguistic minorities with view to ensure that there is no differentiation in enjoying certain rights for the two categories.

Apart from few projects most Aromanian cultural activities especially related to the language teaching have been launched thanks to outside funding in particular from Romania: The Aromanian minority does not enjoy any radio or television coverage.

Our organization – The Cultural Association „Aromanians of Albania”, strongly support that Aromanians have Romania as a kin-state. The creation of the new identity for Aromanians, far from any real historical, cultural and linguistical background, is dangerous for our people and even for Europe.

Inspite of all these different opinions our main issue is the protection of our language from vanishing.

The Third Report submitted by Albania

pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ACFC/SR/III(2011)001, 10th January 2011)

It is regrettable that the Third Report submitted by Albania presents a number of omissions, incorrect, incomplete and inconsistent data with the Second Opinion of the Advisory Council (AC) of FCNM adopted on 29 May 2008. Thus, instead of attempted compliance and correction of the points identified in the Opinion AC, the Albanian authorities have adopted a line of denial of reality, which is a regression with reference to the previous report of Albania FCNM.

The lack of factual data in the Report is substituted through general statements having axiomatic value such as "religious harmony between Albanian citizens is a well known fact" (p. 45, art. 7 and 8).

There is a strong dissonance between exaggerated references to legal texts (including the mentioning in the Report of a series of new pieces of legislation that have no connection with the subject of FCNM) and actions realized pursuant to them. For example, in the case of Art. 10 (the use of mother tongue in public and private space), as in the case of other articles, no specific data is presented.

There can be noticed, however, all over the Report, a tendency to treat cumulatively articles of the Framework Convention (art. 5 and 6, 7 and 8, 12, 13 and 14, then 15, 16 and 17) and not addressing article by article as well as a tendency to limit the space given to relevant facts corresponding to the respective articles, which shows a lack of substance in addressing the problems as well as an attempt to avoid accountability.

We are deeply concerned about the absence of an enumeration of **all** the existing minorities in Albania and about the absence of references to Aromanian/Vlach minority.

Compared to the relevant international documents and compared to the previous official documents the Albanian authorities issued, in this Report, the appellation "ethno-linguistic minorities" was replaced by the syntagm "ethno-lingual".

It is completely biased to make the difference between minorities who have a kin- state and minorities who do not have such a state. That particularly holds for the Aromanians, who recognize Romania as being their kin-state. Such a declaration of the Aromanians as being affiliated to the Romanian-ness was ruled out by the Albanian authorities, although the Romanian state has repeatedly notified the Albanian state in this respect, and the Aromanians from Albania recognized Romania as their kin-state. The perpetuation of this distinction, by ignoring the views of the community is in flagrant contradiction with the provisions of the FCNM and with the recommendations comprised in the Second Opinion of the Advisory Committee of the FCNM on Albania¹¹.

It is not conform to reality that the Albanian state offers an equal treatment to the national and ethno-linguistic minorities. The Constitution of Albania implicitly includes such a

¹¹ (ACFC/OP/II(2008)003, 29 mai 2008, p. 11)"The Advisory Committee notes that **in practice** this classification as „ethno-linguistic” leads de facto to a **differentiated treatment** of the persons of the group concerned since these persons are not able to access certain rights such as minority language education, in the same conditions as those persons recognized as national”

discriminatory approach, as it only makes mention of the national minorities' rights (Article 20).

Thus, Art. 20 of the Albanian Constitution stipulates:

1. Persons who belong to **national minorities** exercise in full equality before the law the human rights and freedoms.
2. They have the right to freely express, without prohibition or compulsion, their ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic belonging. They have the right to preserve and develop it, to study and to be taught in their mother tongue, as well as unite in organizations and societies for the protection of their interests and identity.

The Albanian authorities take advantage of the aforementioned stipulation to deny the other minorities categories the enforcement of the significant legislation.

Such a wording in the Report, in fact, provides the grounding for the Albanian authorities' refusal to take into account the assessment made by the Advisory Committee (AC) of the FCNM.

It is not conform to reality that the stipulations of the domestic Albanian legislation or those of the international documents Albania is part to, are equally applied on the entire Albanian territory. In the case of **ethno-linguistic** minorities, the legislation is **not** enforced **anywhere** on Albanian territory.

Throughout the Report, the word "minorities" freely alternates with the appellation "national minorities", and that creates the false impression that the stipulations regarding the minorities' rights apply indiscriminately. In fact, the examples the Report provides only refer to the national minorities.

Such a wording loophole actually covers the paucity of the real progress made in the implementation of the recommendations included in the Advisory Committee's Opinion.

The Third Report of Albania to FCNM is notable through the failure to respect the recommendations expressed in the second opinion of the AC of the FCNM, and moreover, there is a serious setback for the Vlach/Aromanian community resulting from the entire elimination even in mentioning the community and even by trying to replace this community by creating fictitious entities, treated separately, Wallachians (which refers, in fact, to the inhabitants of the historical Romanian provinces), respectively Arumanians (unknown entity, this appellation never being used internationally or in Council of Europe's documents).

We take this opportunity to protest as energetically as possible against the distorted presentation of the Aromanians on the State Committee for the Minorities' site: the denomination of "Aromanians" is left out. We recall the members of this community name themselves using the word "Aromanians".

Quite unlike the previous official Albanian documents and the international documents Albania is part of, in the aforementioned Report the word "Vlach" was replaced by "Wallachian" and the word "Aromanian" was replaced by the word "Arumanian".

Furthermore, quite unlike the previous official Albanian documents and the international documents Albania is part of, in the aforementioned Report the disjunction was used between the two words ("Wallachian" and "Arumanians"), probably to create the impression that there are two *sui generis* (so-called) ethnic groups, different from one another, and different from the Aromanians.

In both cases, the risk exists whereby the stipulations of the hitherto current documents no longer apply to the Aromanians from Albania. These documents made mention of "Aromanians/Vlachs" and not of "Arumanians" and "Wallachians". In the Report there is no

specific stipulation that the new denominations apply to the ethnic group previously known under the name of "Aromanian/Vlach."

Such wording loopholes only continue the Albanian domestic practice to fragment the Aromanian community under a diversity of regional names (among which "Leatsifatsi", „How ya doin', pal?") or simply forged denominations (Makedonarmans).

Against this background, the extreme concern and fear of the community arise, as it is believed that this subterfuge of the Albanian authorities is meant to avoid implementation of the recommendations and provisions of the international documents regarding the Vlachs/Aromanians, and in particular the recommendations of AC of the FCNM.

The concern is caused, also, by the problem of the following census programmed this autumn and by the pressures of the politicians (parliamentarians and Ceams party leaders), on the public opinion and on the journalists or former MPs, and also of certain government bodies (the High Council of Justice, through his Vice-President, Kreshnik Spahiu) that the declaration of identity affiliation in the census to be taken into account **only** if confirmed by the documents of civil status or court decisions.

In such a case, the statements regarding the Aromanian ethnic affiliation **will not be considered** because the courts and offices of civil status recognize only for the national minorities (Greeks, Macedonians, Serbo-Montenegrins) the right to declare a different ethnic affiliation than Albanian. **Aromanians are only an ethno-linguistic minority.**

Also, it is not conform to reality that the Albanian national legislation or international documents to which Albania is part to, applies uniformly on the entire territory of Albania. For example, non-applicability on the entire Albanian territory happens not only in the case of the Aromanian community that is not even recognized as national minority, but even in the case of the ethnic Macedonian, recognized as national minority. Thus, the ethnic Macedonian coming from other regions than Prespa are not registered as such into the registry office and they can not benefit from the provisions of the legislation regarding education for national minorities. There are similar complaints from the Greek ethnics.

As far as the allegations of the Third Report of Albania to the FCNM regarding the State Committee for Minorities are concerned, it should be mentioned that the Aromanians have no legitimate representative in this Committee. Because of this reason, the Minority Law will not reflect their interests.

The conditions imposed by the Albanian state in order to establish classes in minority languages have been considered by the Advisory Committee of the FCNM as **prohibitive**, but the Albanian authorities have not changed these provisions.¹²

¹² (ACFC/OP/II(2008)003, p. 33: 183) *The Advisory Committee invites the authorities to show flexibility in applying their criteria for opening a class in minority language and to look at ways of simplifying the system so as to avoid having numerous categories of eligibility for instruction in minority languages. In addition, bearing in mind the fact that belonging to national minorities is a matter of personal choice, the practice to rely on the ethnic origin as stated in the birth certificates should be reviewed by the authorities as a matter of urgency.*

184. *The Advisory Committee considers that a dialogue should be opened with the Macedonian minority with regard to the aforementioned disagreement on the number of hours of instruction in minority language.*

185. *In particular, the Advisory Committee asks that efforts be made to meet the demands of national minorities, especially those for which such instruction is not available, such as the Serbo-Montenegrin minority, in accordance with Article 14 paragraph 2.*

(ACFC/OP/II(2008)003, p. 29: *Representatives of a number of national minorities, including the Vlach/Aromanian and Roma minorities, complained that school textbooks did not contain enough information about their communities.*)

According to the report, referring to minority associations, "they are designed to maintain the historical traditions, language and culture" while "the state allows and recognizes their work and consider them partners in dialogue" (pp. 45, art. 7 and 8) without mentioning any other items showing the involvement and support of the state, seeking to translate the responsibilities of the state to these NGOs in relationship with national minorities.

Even in these conditions, the document contains **no** comments and opinions **of the Aromanian representatives (Cultural Association "Aromanians in Albania")**, which presented obstacles to the efforts to preserve and promote their language and culture, accusing the lack of any financial support from the state for activities developed and the editing of publications, the lack of real communication with the Committee for National Minorities, and difficulties in the implementation of language programs in public institutions and private broadcasting.

The Report denies practically AC Second Opinion on Albania's findings and the opportunity to comply with the recommendations of AC FCNM through the statements of this Third Report¹³.

¹³ In the ethno-linguistic minorities case, the legislation **is not applicable on the entire territory** of Albania (ACFC/OP/II(2008)003, p. 7: *The currently available minority language public broadcasting is limited to minority zones and concerns de facto only the Macedonian and the Greek minorities. Serbo-Montenegrins, Roma and Vlach/Aromanians, on their part, are not included in regular programming. In the field of legislation, no specified amount of broadcasted programmes aimed at minorities is provided for in Albanian legislation.*

p. 19: *Apart from a few projects, most Vlach/Aromanian cultural activities, especially in relation to language teaching (see also under Article 14), have been launched **thanks to outside funding, in particular from Romania**. Vlach/Aromanian representatives are disappointed that the Albanian government has not provided any support for their culture and language, which they believe are under threat to die out. In the Advisory Committee's view, while support from agencies outside Albania may be useful and cannot be overlooked, it must not replace government action in this area and even more so for minorities who cannot rely on other states' support, as this makes them more vulnerable.)*

ACFC/OP/II(2008)003, p. 32: 180. *According to the Ministry of Education and Science, no requests have been received for the opening of classes outside "minority zones". For their part, representatives of national minorities, particularly the Greek minority, stated that they had requested the opening of such classes in the past, but that their requests had been rejected by the authorities on the grounds that the relevant criteria were not met. This was also the case for the Serbo-Montenegrin minority's 2003 request that a class be opened in the Shkodër area, where the minority is concentrated.*

More recently, representatives of the Vlach/Aromanian minority also had their request for the opening of a class in Lushnjë refused. The Advisory Committee notes that the aforementioned request from the Vlach/Aromanian minority was not acted upon because the request for opening an Aromanian class did not attain such a majority.

THE SCHOOLS FOR THE AROMANIANS IN ALBANIA

The schools for Aromanians on the present territory of Albania have been opened long before the formation of the modern Albanian state in 1912. All of them were sponsored by the Kingdom of Romania, along with a number of churches.

The new-born Albania inherited this *status quo* from the Otoman Empire.

Through the Irade (Decree) Sultan Abdul Hamid the 2nd issued on May the 22nd 1905, the Aromanians were recognized as *millet*, and were granted the same administrative, religious and educational organization rights all the other nationalities recognized by the Empire enjoyed, such as the Greeks, the Bulgarians, the Serbs, the Armenians, the Jews.

At the moment of its admission as a member of the United Nations' Society, on the 2nd of October 1921, Albania has signed a *Statement* in front of the Council of Society, pledging to observe and bring into force the general principles provided in the Treaties concerning Minorities, which had already been signed by all the other member states.

It was the condition Albania had to fulfill in order to become a member of the aforementioned organization, fact which guaranteed international recognition for the Albanian state. The same day, the Council adopted a Resolution through which Albania's commitment was being vouched for by the Nations' Society Council.

On 9th of October 1925, the Council of Ministers of Republic of Albania agreed to the improvement of education conditions for Aromanians in schools of Korçë, Pljasë, Shpëskë, in accordance to the „*Convention*” minister plenipotentiary Simion Mândrescu negotiated with foreign affairs minister Mufid Bej Libohova.

In November 1925, foreign affairs minister Hysen Bej Vrioni informed the Diplomatic Office of Romania in Tirana that: „Albanian government, in order to satisfy the legitimate request of Romania will grant all the facilitations needed for the opening of schools in those communes with Aromanian population, on the demand of the respective Aromanian communities”.

On February 1st, 1926, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Albania decided as follows:

- to introduce the Romanian language in those primary schools with enough Aromanian students;
- to allow the creation of a 1st degree class with the Korçë high school, for Aromanian students from Korçë, Pljasë, Shpëskë;
- to agree with the creation of a craftsmanship school for Aromanian girls;
- to authorize the Romanian Red Cross to establish two student dormitories with 50 beds, for Aromanian boys and girls respectively.

The General Education Directorate from Albania on March 23rd 1926 issued a Circular Letter No. 519, published in the Albanian Official Monitor No, 24, of March 29th 1926, whereby “all those were notified, who had served before as Romanian language teachers, as well as all those who can speak this language and wish to be employed as teachers wherever the Romanian people resides in large numbers; accordingly, all these people should submit their applications, and their study certificates to the education inspectorate of the constituency they were ascribed to, so that they could be considered for the next school year, and be appointed teachers of Romanian, a language that in the future will be

taught concurrently with the official language of the state.”(The Romanian Foreign Ministry Archives, the Albanian Fund, vol. 15/1926, Albanian Schools).

During the fall of 1926 the high school in Korçë should have been re-opened and schools for the Aromanians in Niçë, Grabovë, Lëngë, Elbasan should have been established, according to minister for foreign affairs Hysen Vrioni and the speaker of the Senate, Pandeli Evangjeli, under the condition that the teachers should have been Albanian subjects, paid by Albanian state.

In October 1927 the official decision to nationalize the schools for Aromanians had been made, by continuing to teach in Romanian.

In November 1930, Albanian authorities decided to re-privatize the schools for Aromanians. This was just an *intermezzo*, because on April the 25th 1933 the new Albanian Constitution was enacted, through which all the private teaching institutions were being nationalized again, including those belonging to Aromanian communities.

On April 5th, 1934, the Hellenic national minority in Albania addressed the Council of the Nations' Society, protesting against the decisions of the Albanian government, namely those on dismantling the private schools with teaching in Greek language.

On January 11th, 1935, the Council of the Nations' Society decided to seek the service of the International Permanent Court of Justice in Hague concerning ethnic schools in Albania.

On April the 7th 1935, the Permanent Court of Justice in Hague issued an Advice, rejected as groundless the tenet of the Albanian government, according to which the removal of private schools in Albania is not discriminatory, but a general measure affecting both to the majority and to the minorities, according to Paragraph I., Art. 5 of the Albanian Declaration from October the 2nd 1921.

On April 26th, 1935, the Albanian minister for foreign affairs had informed the representative of Romania in Tirana that the King Zogu I had agreed to the official re-opening of Aromanian schools starting with the respective date (they had started to function since May the 6th 1935, following the same system as before the nationalization).

Finally, on May 9th 1936 the Decree-Law on the opening and functioning of private schools in Albania had been issued.

Only for a short time again, because on April the 8th 1939 Albania was occupied by Italian troops and on April the 12th it entered in personal union with Italy.

No.	Town/village	Type of school	Period	
0	1	2	3	0
1	Berat	Gymnasium	opened 1894; closed 1941	1
		Primary school – boys	o. 1891; c. 1915	2
		Primary school – girls	o. 1890; c. 1915	3
		Commercial school	o. 1899; c. 1901	4
2	Dishnicë	Primary school	o. 1926; c. 1940	5
3	Durrës	Primary school – mixt	o. 1892; c. 1927	6
		Primary school - boys	o. 1892; c. 1927	7
4	Elbasan	Primary school – boys	o. 1899; c. 1915	8
		Primary school – girls	o. 1902; c. 1915	9
		Primary school – mixt	o. 1925; c. 1927	10
5	Fieri	Primary school – mixt	o. 1895; c. 1927	11
6	Frashëri	Primary school – mixt	o. 1893; c. 1915	12
7	Grabovë	Primary school – boys	o. 1899; c. 1925	13
		Primary school – girls	o. 1899; c. 1925	14
		Primary school – mixt	o. 1925; c. 1941	15
8	Grëdishte	Primary school	o. 1899; c. 1901	16
9	Kavajë	Primary school	o. 1895; c. 1901	17
10	Korçë	Gymnasium	o. 1925; c. 1944	18
		Primary school – boys	o. 1884; c. 1927	19
		Primary school – girls	o. 1893; c. 1941	20
11	Voshopjë	Primary school – boys	o. 1890; c. 1941	21
		Primary school – girls	o. 1893; c. 1941	22
12	Lëngë	Primary school – mixt	o. 1899; c. 1941	23
13	Lushnjë/Karbunarë	Primary school – mixt	o. 1906; c. 1915	24
14	Niçë	Primary school – mixt	o. 1897; c. 1941	25
15	Përmeti	Primary school – mixt	o. 1899; c. 1927	26
16	Pljasë	Primary school – boys	o. 1883; c. 1927	27
		Primary school – girls	o. 1899; c. 1925	28
17	Pogradec	Primary school	o. 1926; c. ?	29
18	Shipskë	Primary school – boys	o. 1892; c. 1915	30
		Primary school – girls	o. 1904; c. 1915	31
		Primary school – mixt	o. 1913; c. 1944	32
19	Tiranë	Primary school – mixt	o. 1899; c. 1943	33
20	Vithkuqi	Primary school	o. 1905; c. 1915	34

**The Aromanians' Congress
THE AROMANIANS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION
PRESENT AND PERSPECTIVES
Tirana, November 17-18,2009**

RESOLUTION

Delegates of the Aromanian organizations and associations represented at the Aromanians' International Congress (Tirana, November 17-18, 2009),

Invoking the relevant corpus of official documents issued by the United Nations, the European Union, The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the European Council, international bodies to which the Aromanians' "home countries" in the Balkan region belong,

Expressing their concern over the authorities' lack of interest in the Aromanians' "home countries" across the Balkan region regarding the protection of Aromanians' ethnic rights to education, religious service and media in their mother tongue, all of which having serious consequences on the Aromanians' social and cultural de-nationalization and marginalization,

Highlighting, for a second time around, the lack of progress in Aromanians' "home countries" in the Balkan region with respect to the implementation of the Resolution 1333 (1997) of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly,

Once again expressing their concern regarding the proliferation, at international level, of a series of "neoromanian" entities, with a forged legitimacy (Fara Armânească/the Aromanians' Community from Romania, the Vlachs' Union from Albania, the Vlachs' Association from Albania, "Mandra Vlahă" from Albania, the Aromanians'/Macedon-Armanians' Council, and so on) and claiming the right to unanimously represent Aromanians in their relationships with state and international institutions,

Deeply worried by the proclivity of the aforementioned "neoromanian" entities to manipulate historical data and the realities of the present, pertaining to Aromanians' existence in their various "home countries" in the Balkan region, or in their immigration countries, all that resulting in the alienation of Aromanians' identity consciousness,

Reiterating the linguistic, cultural, historical and identity specificity of various groups of Aromanians (Pharsalites, Gramustians, Pindians, Moscopolitans)

In total accordance with and as a continuation of the resolution issued by

- The Macedo-Romanian Cultural Congress from North America (July1st-4th, 2005, Fairfield, Connecticut, the USA)
- The Congress dedicated to Vlachs'(Aromanians') Continuity in the Balkans (August 23rd –24th 2003, August 26-27th 2005, August 24-26th 2007, Constantza, Romania)

In keeping with the communiqués and press releases issued by the Association of Macedo-Romanian Culture, of the "Andrei Saguna" Aromanian Cultural and Science Foundation, of the "Picurarlu di la Pind" /The Shepherd from Pind Association, as well as in keeping with press releases issued by the "Aromanians from Albania" Cultural Association, with the "Musata Armana"/The Handsome Aromanian Woman Foundation, of the Dimandarea Parinteasca/"Forefathers' Pledge" Aromanian Cultural Foundation, a.s.o.,

1. Delegates at the aforementioned Congress hereby deliver a pointed warning at the extremely serious consequences the ongoing tendencies might have on maintaining and preserving the Aromanians' identity, particularly when it comes to ignoring and denying the Aromanians' specific rights to education, religious service and mass-media in the mother tongue, in Aromanians' "home countries" across the Balkan region,
2. Utterly condemns the mystifications by means of which the Aromanians' history and identity are distorted in the Aromanians' "home countries" in the Balkan region, with the clear purpose of denying Aromanians the status of national minority,
3. Protests against the schemes and loopholes in interpreting the legislation whereby the authorities in the Aromanians' "home countries" in the Balkan region strive to deny Aromanians their national minority status and the ensuing rights,
4. Would like to remind the Aromanians's "home countries" in the Balkan region that accepting the ethnic, cultural-linguistic diversity and respecting the ethnic rights are prerequisites of the integration in the European and Euro-Atlantic structures.
5. Strongly criticizes the mystifying attempts coming from a series of "neoromanian" entities, with a false representatively and legitimacy among the Aromanians, to forge a new identity for Aromanians, concocting the label "macedonarmâni", and deliberately creating a confusion with the traditional denomination of Macedo-români/Macedo-romanians. This is a purely extremist decoy, stemming from mercantile/money-making and political interests of several circles inside and outside Romania, who ignore the true history of this branch of the eastern Romance area and of the Aromanian dialect which, together with the Dacian-romanian dialect, as well as with the Megleno-romanian and Istro-romanian dialects, make the Romanian language.
6. Condemns as preposterous, provocative, dangerous and falsifying the allegations according to which the Aromanians ("macedonarmâni"/the "macedonarmanians") make a people which is different from the Romanian people, and should be recognized as a national minority in Romania. The Aromanians first came north of the Danube after the Romanian states had been formed, and their number in the region had continually grown in time. With no exception, the Aromanians thought they settled among brothers, in their own country, with an unwavering awareness they were part and parcel of the Romanian people.
7. Delegates at the Congress reiterate the fact that Aromanians are part of the Romanian identity, concurrently with the Dacian-romanians, and irrespective of the denomination used in the Aromanians' home countries from the Balkan region, to name the Aromanians.
8. Delegates demand from the Romanian state:
 - To assume full responsibility it has towards Romanian identity in the Balkans, in keeping with the continuity, and in the spirit of a valuable historic tradition, as it can be seen the in the European and Romanian diplomatic documents;
 - To express publicly, through actions with a diplomatic and international scope, its interest for the Aromanians from outside the borders of Romania, in its capacity of a kin-state for those Aromanians;
 - To continue and step up efforts to support the Aromanians/rrămăni/vlachs around the world, so that they can benefit, in the Aromanians' "home countries" across the Balkan region, from the rights and freedoms stipulated by the European specialized documents, so that the Aromanians can preserve, enhance and assert their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious entity;

- To continue and step up the domestic support for the preservation and development of the Aromanian traditions, dialect and culture, so as not to nourish frustrations which can be capitalized upon by “neoromanians”, to alienate the Aromanians’ identity and undermine the Romanian people’s national unity.
- 9. Delegates at the Congress demand from the European and international authorities in right to undertake the required efforts to recognize the Aromanians as a national minority in the Aromanians’ “home countries” in the Balkan region, and in order to grant Aromanians the rights ensuing from their national minority status.
- 10. Points 8 and 9 also refer to the other two branches of Romanian identity: the Megleno-romanians and the Istro-romanians.
- 11. Delegates at the aforementioned Congress decide the establishment of the International Forum of the Aromanians (on a partnership basis, with periodical meetings), of the legitimate and representative organizations of the Aromanians from around the world, as well as the establishment of a Permanent Secretariat of the aforementioned Forum, meant to manage the Aromanian problem between the congress sessions, and to prepare the congress. The statutes of the Aromanians’ International Forum and of the Permanent Secretariat are yet to be decided upon.

NOTE: Against the backdrop of the present resolution, , through” Aromanians’ home countries” in the Balkan region we need to understand those states where the Aromanians are an indigenous population, as opposed to the Aromanians’ immigration states, according to the stipulations of the Resolution 1333(1997) of the APCE.

Vangjel Shundi

President of the “Aromanians from Albania” Cultural Association

Ion Caramitru

President of the Association for Macedo-Romanian Culture

Dr. Stoica Lascu, Senior lecturer in Balkan Linguistics

President of the Association “Picurarlu di la Pind”/the Shepherd from Pind”

Zvetlana Nikolin

Representative of “In Media Res” Serbia

Victor Enache

President of the “Carlibana” Cultural Association

Aureliu Ciufecu

President of the Macedo-Romanian Cultural Congress from the USA

Dr. Aurel Papari, University Professor

President of the Aromanians’ “Andrei Saguna” Science and Cultural Foundation

Doctoral candidate Gheorghe Zamani

President of the “Veria” Cultural Association

Elena Wisosenschi

President of the “Musata Armana”/Handsome Aromanian Woman” Association

The Ottoman Empire's successor states inherited from the Empire a state of the affairs, as well as a legal outlook with respect to the Aromanian issue:

- Through the Vizier's ordinance (Savfet Pasa) issued on September 9th, 1912, the Aromanians' right was recognized, entitling them to religious service and education in their mother tongue.
- Through the Irade (Decree) Sultan Abdul Hamid the 2nd issued on May the 22nd 1905, the Aromanians were recognized as *millet*, and were granted the same administrative, religious and educational organization rights all the other nationalities recognized by the Empire enjoyed, such as the Greeks, the Bulgarians, the Serbs, the Armenians, the Jews.
- Through the Teskere (Official paper) issued on May the 23rd 1905, the Ottoman Minister of Justice and Religious Affairs decided that "the Vlach priests could not be prevented from celebrating the ceremony of their own religious persuasion, in their mother tongue, nor are they to be prevented from employing this language in their schools; the Vlachs will also be allowed to appoint their own *muhtars* (mayors) according to the current laws; no one can hinder the teaching staff and the education inspectors, appointed by the Vlach community, from exerting their responsibility...and finally, the Vlachs can participate in the election of their members of the administrative councils".

The aforementioned documents had been issued at the direct intervention of the Royal Romanian Government.

Initially, Albania accepted the *statu quo*, observing the rights of the Aromanians living on its territory, rights pertaining to education, information and religious service in the Romanian language. Between 1913 and 1947 in Albania, 25 schools and 10 Romanian churches had been operational, within various organizational frameworks. This set of good practices the Albanian state enacted with respect to the Aromanians was only interrupted during World War One and the Italian occupation. Between October 1927 and 1935, education in the mother tongue for the Aromanians from Albania was held also in the state schools. And that represents a direct recognition by the Albanian authorities of the minority-kinship state relationships, pertaining to the Aromanians and Romania.

The status of the Aromanians' living in Albania used to be a commonly shared discussion topic between the Romanian Legation and the King, the Prime Minister, the Parliament President, the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Public Instruction from Albania.

The General Education Directorate from Albania on March 23rd 1926 issued a Circular Letter No. 519, published in the Albanian Official Monitor No, 24, of March 29th 1926, whereby "all those were notified, who had served before as Romanian language teachers, as well as all those who can speak this language and wish to be employed as teachers wherever the Romanian people resides in large numbers; accordingly, all these people should submit their applications, and their study certificates to the education inspectorate of the constituency they were ascribed to, so that they could be considered for the next school year, and be appointed teachers of Romanian, a language that in the future will be taught concurrently with the official language of the state."(The Romanian Foreign Ministry Archives, the Albanian Fund, vol. 15/1926, Albanian Schools).

Even during the communist regime, the Aromanians from Albania were holders of identity papers where their ethnic specificity had been recognized, under the denomination of "Rumun".

As a result of the change in political regime that occurred in Romania and Albania in the 1990s, natural relations were resumed between the Aromanians and Romania, under transition circumstances, and later on, under the circumstances of the democratic progress in both countries. Albanian citizens of Aromanian ethnicity were granted thousands of scholarships. At this point, we should also recall Romanians' and Aromanians' sole demands targeted their rights to education, religious service and information in the mother tongue. Throughout history, there has been repeated proof of Aromanians' constant faithfulness towards the Albanian state.

The Treaty of agreement, collaboration and good neighborhood between Albania and Romania focuses on Romanians (originating from Romania – descendants of Romanian citizens) and the Aromanians from Albania, using the unifying denomination “people of Romanian origin, from Albania.” (Art.15).

THE CULTURAL ASSOCIATION “AROMANIANS FROM ALBANIA” (CAAA)

The Cultural Association “Aromanians from Albania” (CAAA) represents the Aromanians from Albania in an overwhelming proportion. The Association brings together 16 other associations from across all areas inhabited by Aromanians.

The CAAA was founded in 1991. For more than twenty years now, it has been promoting the values of the Aromanians from Albania. It has never ceased to organize cultural activities; it has published books of Aromanian history in the Aromanian dialect, as well as biographies of leading figures of Aromanian descent.

The Association liaised with prestigious international institutions accredited in Albania; it took part in international meetings focusing on the law of ethnic minorities in Albania. That included the Opinions on Albania of the Advisory Committee pertaining to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Europe (also ratified by the Albanian Parliament).

Here are some of our activities, listed below:

1. The preservation of the mother tongue and its handing down to the new generations:
 - A school, a library and a nursery school were founded in Divjaka. For twelve years now, secondary school children have learned how to speak, write and read in Aromanian, with Latin characters.
 - We also published books and brochures about Aromanians.
 - We edited the 8-page, A3-format Aromanian –Albanian monthly magazine, *The Fraternity*, in 1,000 copies. In March 2010, we brought out the 161st issue of our magazine.
 - Two Aromanian churches were built (in Korçea and Pogradec).
2. Preservation of traditions and customs
 - We boast an annual participation in international festivals of Aromanian songs and dances.
 - On May the 23rd, the International Day of the Aromanians is celebrated on a rotating basis, in all regions where there are Aromanian associations, affiliated to the AACCA. The event usually includes debates on topics related to the history of Aromanians, and their role in Albania, as well as elsewhere around the world.
3. Awareness-raising activities, targeting the public opinion and official institutions in Albania.
 - Publication of articles; taking part in debates;
 - Taking a stance against the action of those who have not yet understood the problem related to the defense of minorities’ rights.
 - Participating in a series of meetings with the representatives of public institutions and authorities of the Albanian state, up to the level of President, Prime Minister and president of Parliament. All these meetings were focusing on the Aromanian problem.

- Organizing awareness-raising campaigns among the Aromanians, whereby the latter assumed their own ethnicity to the greatest possible extent –a hitherto unknown achievement.

Making use of the whole range of democratic methods, we would like to draw everyone's attention to the necessity of completely enforcing the International Organizations Recommendations, in keeping with the specifications of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination Convention and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities across Europe.