

Speech at the first UN Regional Forum for Minorities Rights, 6th-7th of May 2019, Brussels

by Stere Stamule

Dear organizers,

Dear speakers,

Dear participants,

We look so nice in this room, on these chairs, where the MEPs are usually sitting and this gives me some hope.

The symbolism of our gathering might not bring us to build a Parliament of the Minorities, but maybe to put our well-deserved rights on the priority list of the next EU Parliament Agenda. In addition, why not in the future to develop also a Committee of the Minorities similar to the of the Committee of the Regions?

Even if I invested almost 15 years in defending our cause and I learnt a lot of things about the minorities rights and their different characteristics around Europe, when I turn back come I see the accelerated assimilation process of my family and my community identity.

I am still young, with a little bit more experience and knowledge, but however, more pessimistic of our future in the European Union, and about the future of EU, in general. Losing our culture and similar ones as ours, will not bring Europe forward.

I know that I am dreamer, similar with almost all of you hear, and I know that we have to continue our work I order to create a Europe who learnt from its past, who becomes a model for the rest of the world. I would like to be more optimistic, but this will not be possible without your help.

Dear organizers,

Dear speakers,

Dear participants,

Before I will start to relate to them appointed to this panel "*Effective practices in teaching and education in minority languages*", I would like to make a short description of my community and language that I am representing here. My name is Stere Stamule, I speak here in the name the "*Arman Community in Romania*" Association, on behalf of my family and on behalf of the Armans from the Balkan countries that I met and shared my thoughts and believes.

The Arman Language is mainly spoken in Southern-Eastern Europe (Central and North of Greece, Southern Albania, Republic of North Macedonia, Southern Bulgaria, Serbian and Southern-East Romania) and is spoken or understood by more than 300.000 people.

The Arman Language is as many other European Languages of Latin origin (like Occitan, Sardinian, Friulan), in danger of disappearance. The Arman Language is a vivid language, even if it is less and less spoken, due to the lack of the proper means of promotion, of a real language policy. The Arman Language needs a coherent language and cultural policy to survive and live together with the languages of the world.

Dear organizers,

Dear speakers,

Dear participants,

I will address now the recommended subject for this panel, where I would like to present some positive remarks about a successful project developed by our branch in Bucharest, Romania, “*Anveatsâ Armâneashti*” (Learn Arman Language). Four years ago, our project gained the EEA Grants (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway grants), in the amount of almost 80.000 Euros. With the help of this money, we managed to put in practice “*The Arman Language Teaching classes*”. We trained some volunteering teachers, very engaged in learning the Arman Language and also very motivated to teach the language. We developed courses support of three different levels (beginners, medium and advanced). The participants could attend free of charge, and they were usually Armans who did not grow with the Language at home or Romanians interested to learn the language and the culture. Besides the classes, we developed also an online platform bilingual for learning the language (similar with Duolingo) with few hundred users. Another success was the 20 Audiobooks Box that included theater plays, jokes, modern and traditional songs in our language.

However, even though the project generated some positive feelings in our community, the lack of constant support and of a coherent language and cultural policy will stop soon our involvement in saving our language and culture.

Therefore, I call for your support to stop this cultural genocide and address seriously this problem to the Romanian authorities. This issue is not only related to Romania, but also to Greece, Albania, Republic of North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Serbia, where national governments have similar legislations against our identity.