

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

1997 ORDINARY SESSION

RECOMMENDATION 1333 (1997)  
on the Aromanian culture and language

1. The Assembly is concerned about the critical situation of the Aromanian culture and language, which have existed for over two thousand years in the Balkan peninsula.
2. Whereas there were over 500 000 Aromanian speakers at the beginning of the 20th century, there are now only about the half that number, dispersed through Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Serbia, which are their home countries, as well as Romania, Germany, the United States of America and Australia. Most of them are elderly. Aromanian, as a minority language, is under threat.
3. The scale of the problem has become evident since the extension of cultural co-operation to the Balkans, the home of Aromanian.
4. The Aromanian language and culture are facing a similar fate to that of many European cultures which are becoming or have become extinct. However, the acceptance of a pluralist system of cultural values is prerequisite for stability in Europe, and particularly in the Balkans.
5. The Aromanians make no political demands, but merely want assistance in safeguarding their language and culture, which seem doomed to extinction unless the European institutions, and the Council of Europe in particular, come to their aid.
6. The Assembly recalls the texts which it has adopted on related matters, notably Recommendation 928 (1981) on the educational and cultural problems of minority languages and dialects in Europe, Recommendation 1283 (1996) on history and the learning of history in Europe, and Recommendation 1291 (1996) on Yiddish culture.
7. The latter text recommended setting up, under the auspices of the Council of Europe, a "laboratory for dispersed ethnic minorities" with a mandate, inter alia, to promote the survival of minority cultures or their memory, carry out surveys of person still speaking minority languages, record, collect and preserve their monuments and evidence of their language and folklore, publish basic documents and promote legislation to protect minority cultures against discrimination or annihilation.

8. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

i. encourage Balkan states which comprise Aromanian communities to sign, ratify and implement the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages and invite them to support the Aromanians, particularly in the following fields:

a. education in their mother tongue;

b. religious services in Aromanian in their churches;

c. newspapers, magazines and radio and television programs in Aromanian;

d. support for their cultural associations;

ii. invite the other member states to support the Aromanian language, for instance by creating university professorships in the subject and disseminating the most interesting products of Aromanian culture throughout Europe by means of translations, anthologies, courses, exhibitions and theatrical productions;

iii. introduce fellowships for artists, writers, researchers and students from Aromanian minority groups throughout the Balkans, so that they can engage in appropriate creative work in the fields of Aromanian language and culture;

iv. request the Council for Cultural Co-operation, working together with recognized Aromanian cultural activities throughout Europe;

v. invite the education ministers of member states to include the history of Aromanian in European history books;

vi. seek to establish co-operation and partnership with organizations, foundations and other interested bodies in the private sector with a view to implementing these recommendations;

vii. take account of Aromanian culture in its follow-up to Recommendation 1291 (1996), particularly where the "laboratory for dispersed ethnic minorities" is concerned.

[1] Assembly debate on 24 June 1997 (18th Sitting) (see Doc. 7728, report of the Committee on Culture and Education, rapporteur: Mr de Puig).

Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 June 1997 (18th Sitting).