

CHANGES IN THE ETHNIC STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION OF ROMANIA

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Abstract

The evolution of the number and structure of the population according to its ethnicity, is an important problem for any state, with profound political and social implications, especially in substantiating the measures to protect the rights of national minorities. Taking into account the multiple acceptances of the term of ethnicity, in the first part of the paper we tried to clarify this concept starting from the definitions of specialists in the field. The paper presents the main changes in the ethnic structure of the population of Romania based on the statistical data from the last three censuses of the population. The study highlights the fact that during the period 1992-2011 the majority population of Romanian ethnicity registered a slight decrease tendency, from 89.5% to 88.9%, while the minority ethnic groups registered an increase from 10.5% to 11.1% in the same period, mainly as a result of the accelerated dynamics of the Roma population. Also, the paper makes a brief presentation of the main instruments of protection of the rights of national minorities at European level but also in the case of Romania.

Keywords: *ethnic structure, national minorities, ethnic group, minority protection*

Introduction

National minorities have always been a topic of interest in European states, not only because of the complexity of the problems associated with them, but also because of their economic, political and social importance in the overall development of the states in which they live. The term of minority, although it has no universally accepted legal definition, include a number of common elements. In the first part of the paper we tried to clarify the concepts of ethnicity and national minority, starting from the definitions of some specialists in the field.

Based on the statistical data obtained during the last three censuses of the population, we have highlighted the main changes in the ethnic structure of the population of Romania. Knowing the ethnic structure of the population, the territorial distribution of ethnic groups are important aspects in substantiating the policies for the rights of national minorities.

The concept of ethnicity

Before presenting the evolution and changes in the ethnic structure of the population of Romania, we consider it necessary to clarify the concept of ethnicity, a concept that presents different meanings from one country to another or depending on the legal, social, political or demographic perspective. However varied and complex the acceptations of the term "ethnicity" may be, it is useful to try to systematize them.

Etymologically, the notion comes from Greek from "ethnos", indicating a community of people of the same origin and ancestry. A renowned researcher on the problem of ethnicity (Max Weber) considers, "ethnic groups are those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization or migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists" [1].

In the same way, Fearon and Laitin consider ethnic group is "a group larger than a family for which membership is reckoned primarily by descent, is conceptually autonomous, and has a conventionally recognized "natural history" as a group [2].

According to Anthony Smith, an ethnic group is, "a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of a common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity" [1].

Elements of this definition are taken from researcher Kanchan Chandra, who believes that ethnic identities "have a subset of identity categories in which membership is determined by attributes associated with, or believed to be associated with, descent (described in the article simply as" descent -based attributes "[3].

In the definition of ethnic groups some authors [4] use the term of ethnic (cultural) nation, which means all ethnicities linked by cultural belonging, regardless of the state in which they live.

Other researchers have explained the term ethnicity as a result of a way of life, based on one's own language and culture, coupled with spatial determination, which results in solidarity between people.

Thus, according to Richard Molard, "ethnicity" is a community of language, habits, beliefs and values, based on the spatial criterion. For the Meyer Fortes researcher, "ethnicity" represented a spatially determined group, within which there are close social links [4]. In some cases, the term of ethnicity is used in conjunction with the terms "ethnic minority" and "ethnic group". The ethnic minority designates a social entity, "a distinct group" of the population within the society, whose culture is different from that of the majority of the population [5].

In the European tradition, "ethnicity" is not perceived as a synonym for the phrase "ethnic minority", but as a determining element of the nation. According to this approach, society as a whole, not just ethnic minorities, belongs to a certain "ethnic group" [6].

Regarding the statistical surveys realized in Romania on the structure of population by individual groups (the censuses mainly), were used the term of nationality (the 1977 and 1992 censuses) and the term of ethnicity (the 2002 and 2011 censuses) but with the same meaning.

It should be noted that the term of nationality taking into account in the calculation of the number and structure of the population at the censuses was used in the sense of ethnic origin and not of citizenship.

Thus, the following definition appears in the Census Staff Manual: "Ethnicity is defined as the choice of a person to belong to a human group with common features of civilization and culture, through one or more of the characteristics related to language, religion, common traditions and customs, lifestyle etc." [7]. In contrast to this approach, the European Convention on Nationality of 6 November 1997 defines nationality as the legal link between a person and a state and does not refer to the ethnic origin of the person [8].

The Evolution of the number and structure of the ethnic population in Romania

Knowing the number and ethnic structure of the population, the dynamics and changes involved in its evolution represent an important objective of the official statistics of any state taking into account its social but also political implications. On the other hand, the protection of the rights of the ethnic minorities would not be possible without knowing of their size and of the territorial distribution. In the statistical research of the number,

structure and evolution of the population by ethnic groups the most important sources of information are the population censuses.

To analyse the changes in the ethnic structure of the population of Romania, we used the statistical data obtained during the last three censuses of the population (Table 1). According to the data presented in table 1 but also in figure 1, the ethnic structure of the population of Romania experienced some changes, between 1992 and 2011, especially in the case of minority ethnic groups.

At the last census, from January 1992 census, the population's structure by ethnicity was as follows: Romanians (89.5%), Hungarians (7.1%), Roma (1.8%), Germans (0.5%), Ukrainians (0.3%), Russians-Lipovens (0.2%), Turks (0.1%) and Tatars (0.1%).

The evolution of Romania's population, by nationalities, in Romania, at census, between 1992 and 2011

Table 1

Ethnicity	1992		2002		2011	
	persons	%	persons	%	persons	%
Total	22810035	100.0	21680974	100.0	20121641	100.0
Romanians	20408542	89.5	19399597	89.5	16792868	88.9
Hungarians	1624959	7.1	1431807	6.6	1227623	6.5
Roma	401087	1.8	535140	2.5	621573	3.3
Ukrainians	65764	0.3	61098	0.3	50920	0.3
Germans	119462	0.5	59764	0.3	36042	0.2
Turks	29832	0.1	32098	0.1	27698	0.1
Russians -Lipovens	38606	0.2	35791	0.2	23487	0.1
Tatars	24596	0.1	23935	0.1	20282	0.1

Data sources: <http://colectaredate.insse.ro/phc/public.do?siteLang=ro>, NIS Bucharest, [9].

Analysing the data from table 1 we can find that, excepting the Roma population, which, during the period 1992-2011 registered an increase of 55.0% (+ 220486 persons), all the other ethnic groups experienced decreases in the population, in some cases significant.

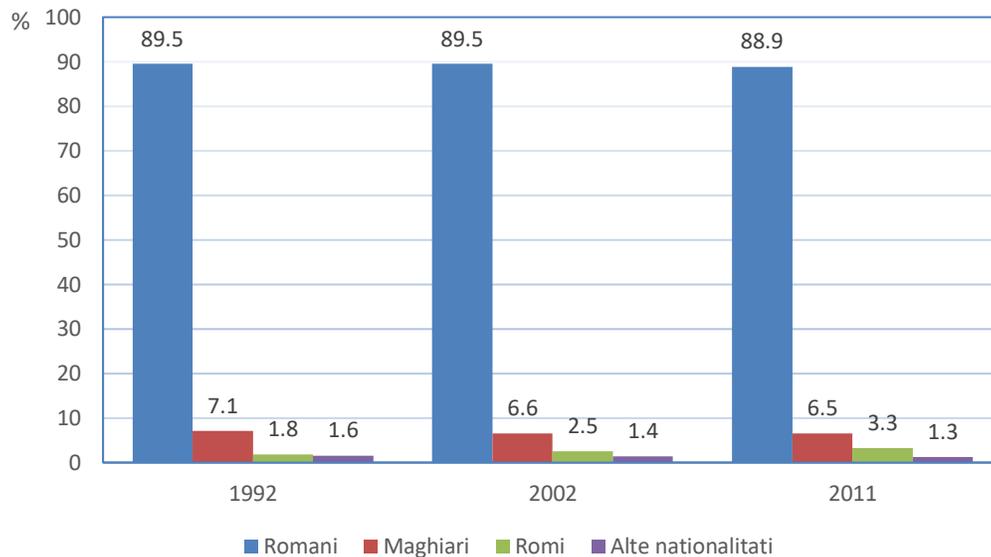
These different evolutions have led to changes in ethnic structure, more important being:

- The decrease of the share of the Romanian ethnic population from 89.5% in 1992 to 88.9% in 2011, mainly as a result of the sharp decrease of the population number (-17.7% respectively 3615674 persons) due to the decrease of birth and growth of external migration;
- The increase of the share of the Roma population from 1.8% in 1992 to 3.3% in 2011, an increase determined both by the higher birth rate in this case compared to the other ethnic groups but also because to the census from 1992, many Roma people declared themselves to be Romanian;
- The decrease of the share of the German ethnic population from 0.5% in 1992 to 0.3% in 2011, mainly as a result of the migration of a large number of German ethnic groups; during the analysed period, the population of German ethnicity decreased by 83420 persons, which means a reduction of about 70.0%;

We also note that in the period 1992-2011, the majority population of Romanian ethnicity, holds a share of approximately 89% and the most important (numerically) minority ethnic groups are the Hungarian and the Roma, that together hold about 10% of the total population (Figure 1).

The evolution of the share of the main ethnic groups, in Romania, at census, between 1992 and 2011

Figure 1



Data sources: <http://colectaredate.insse.ro/phc/public.do?siteLang=ro>, NIS Bucharest [9].

The analysis of the structure of the population by ethnic groups is important from the perspective of minority ethnic groups or national minorities as defined in many cases. Among the multiple definitions given to national minorities, we consider that it deserves to be retained the definition given by Recommendation 1201/1993 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: "national minority" refers to a group of persons from a state, which [10]:

- a) They live in the territory of that state and are its citizens;
- b) Maintain long-term, lasting and permanent links with that state;
- c) It has distinct ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics;
- d) They are sufficiently representative, even if they are smaller in number than the rest of the population of a state or a region of that state;
- e) They are motivated by the concern to keep together what constitutes their common identity, including their culture, traditions, religion or language. ”

A definition of national minorities is also found in Romanian law, more precisely in art.56 paragraph 3 of Law no. 208/2015 regarding the election of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies as well as for the organization and functioning of the Permanent Electoral Authority, according to which, by national minority is understood that ethnicity represented in the Council of National Minorities.

As we mentioned earlier, in the case of Romania, national minorities hold just over 10% of the total population, which is close to the European average level [11].

The evolution of the share of Romanian population and the other ethnic groups, at census, between 1930 and 2011

Table 2

Years	Total population (persons)	from which: Romanian	Romanian share in total population (%)
1930	18057028	12981324	71.9
1948	15872624	13597513	85.7
1956	17489450	14996114	85.7
1966	19403163	16746510	87.7
1977	21559910	18999565	88.1
1992	22810035	20408542	89.5
2002	21680974	19399597	89.5
2011	20121641	16792868	88.9

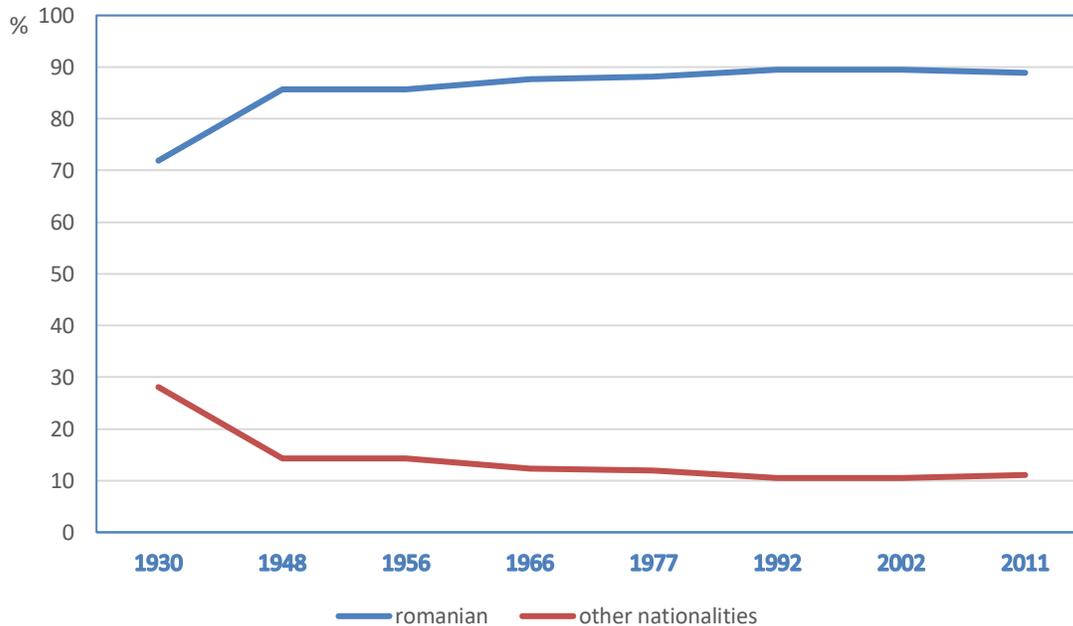
Data sources: <http://colectaredate.insse.ro/phc/aggregatedData.htm>, NIS Bucharest [13].

The share of Romanians in the total population in Romania has now decreased to 88.9% compared to 1992 when it was almost 90%.

The lowest percentage of Romanians was registered in the census of 1930, respectively 71.9%, the rest of the ethnic groups owning then almost 30% of the total population of Romania (Figure 2).

The evolution of the share of Romanian population and the other ethnic groups, at census, between 1930 and 2011

Figure 2



Data sources: <http://colectaredate.insse.ro/phc/aggregatedData.htm>, NIS Bucharest [13].

Starting with the 2011 census, the share of the population of other ethnicities begins to increase, at the expense of the Romanian ethnic population, a process favoured by the intensification of migration at European level.

The protection of the rights of ethnic minorities at European level

Minorities are a major concern of the European Union, determined firstly by the extension to the former communist space, and secondly by the problem of immigrants in the territory of the Union. However, there are large differences among the Member States in terms of their availability to recognize minorities, protect their rights and guarantee their political participation [13].

The Council of Europe as a comprehensive association of all European states based on the ECHR, has created two principals and important international conventions aimed at accommodating the minority question. These are the European Charter for

Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML), adopted in 1992, and the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), adopted in 1995.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (in short ECRML) has been adopted as a Convention by the Committee of Ministers in its meeting of 25 June 1992, with the principal object “the protection of the historical regional or minority languages of Europe, some of which are in danger of eventual extinction, contributes to the maintenance and development of Europe’s cultural wealth and traditions” (preamble). The ECRML tries to ensure the use of these languages in the private and public sphere, such as in education and the mass media, allowing their use also in administrative, judicial, economic and social fields. The Charter does not establish individual or collective rights for the speakers of regional or minority languages, but sets out the obligations of states for their legal systems and political undertaking [10]. The ECRML does not seek to protect minorities or minority members as such, but the languages. It does not create any rights for minority language speakers, even if it refers in the preamble to the inalienable right to use a regional or minority language in private and public life. If a state decides to establish rights for the speakers of the minority languages, they will be rights just under national law.

Another important instrument for minority protection is *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM)*. The origin of the FCNM can be found in Recommendation 1134 (1990) of the Assembly of the Council of Europe. The FCNM define some principles that should be applied to the protection of national minorities, and in the “Vienna Declaration” of the OSCE summit of 9 October 1993, which expressed the wish that the Council of Europe should comprehensively transform the OSCE’s political commitment to minority protection in legal provisions. The Convention was adopted in 1995 by the Committee of Ministers and ratified in 1998 by 12 member states. The FCNM seeks to promote the full and effective equality of national minorities by obliging the states to create appropriate conditions enabling persons belonging to national minorities to preserve and develop their culture and to retain their identity.

The Convention define and promote the principles relating to persons belonging to national minorities in the sphere of public life, such as freedom of peaceful assembly, association, expression and thought conscience and religion and access to media, as

well as in the sphere of freedoms relating to language, education and cross-border co-operation [10].

The FCNM does not, however, directly impose rights for persons belonging to minorities in the signatory states because, in all cases where such references are made, the Framework Convention states that "the States Parties shall endeavour, as far as possible", to assure the respective rights "in the areas traditionally inhabited or in a substantial number of persons belonging to national minorities, if these persons request this and where this request corresponds to a real need" (art. 10).

Also in the case of Romania, the introduction of legislative measures regarding the protection of minorities was also one of the permanent concerns and one of the preconditions of accession to the European Union. Internally, Romania has taken important steps in maintaining and developing a climate of tolerance and multicultural understanding, as well as in creating a legislative and institutional framework that responds to the needs of protection and development of the rights of the national minorities existing here. The persons belonging to the national minorities enjoy, besides the universal human rights, the Constitution of Romania and special rights, in order to maintain the identity of the minority group, at least at the cultural, linguistic and religious level. The Romanian legislation focused mainly on the development of criteria in the field of non-discrimination, the use of the mother tongue in the public sphere and in education, political representation of minorities both at central and local level. The legislation provides important guarantees for the participation of national minorities in the political sphere (Law of local public administration, no. 2001/2001).

Romania's Constitution guarantees a seat in Parliament for a representative of each national minority, in case they failed to reach the electoral threshold in elections. The right to education in the mother tongue is also guaranteed by the Law of national education, no.1 / 2011. According to the revised Constitution, persons belonging to national minorities have the right to use their mother tongue in courts and this possibility is no longer restricted only to criminal courts.

Conclusions

The analysis based on the data provided by the last three censuses of the population emphasizes the idea that the ethnic structure of the population of Romania has not registered major changes, which shows that the Romanian state has maintained the ethnic diversity of the population.

In the period 1992-2011 we can notice a slight decrease of the share of Romanian majority population from 89.5% to 88.9% and an increase of the share of minority groups from 10.5% to 11.1%. However, this increase was determined exclusively by the increase of the number and share of the Roma population (from 1.8% in 1992 to 3.3% in 2011), the other minorities maintaining their share or recording slight reductions.

Romania has taken important steps in maintaining and developing a climate of tolerance and multicultural understanding, as well as in creating a legislative and institutional framework that responds to the needs of protection and development of the rights of the national minorities existing here.

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