

## **MASS MEDIA IN POST-1990 ROMANIA'S NATIONAL MINORITY LANGUAGES: FROM MEANS OF COMMUNICATIONS TO LEVER OF INFLUENCE**

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**Abstract:** *A major right that national minorities in Romania acquired after the Revolution of 1989 was the freedom of speech. With the establishment of representative organizations of ethnic communities, the first publications in the native language appeared. Subsequently, most of them were transformed into bilingual publications, so that they were accessible to the majority population. The role of the media in the native language was initially to promote the languages of national minorities among the communities and to strengthen the community around this primary element of identity. However, there were also ethnic communities which, due to the very close relations with the country of origin, generated the appearance of satellite communities, formed by citizens of the respective countries established in Romania after 1990. They in turn organized themselves into non-governmental entities, with various objects of activity. However, they also paid special attention to the native language press, so that in turn they set up a series of mass media, the latter targeting only the language-speaking population of that language, which are written exclusively in native language. This article examines the publications set up by the representative organizations of ethnic Turks and Tatars in Romania, respectively the Turkish Democratic Union in Romania and the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars in Romania, in the mirror of the mass media set up and supported by Turkish citizens established after 1990 in Romania, aiming to identify the specific characteristics of each category of publications. Although apparently each of them has its own target audience, in reality the publications set up by Turkish citizens settled in Romania after 1990 address not only their own organizations and citizens, but also address issues related to the life and work of historical communities of Turks and Tatars from our country. From a methodological point of view, the case study will be used to create the article, using the content analysis technique. The conclusions of the article will highlight the role of the two categories of publications in the daily life of communities, the influence of the messages sent, the importance given by the communities to each of the two categories of publications, the common elements and those that differentiate them.*

**Keywords:** *ethnic communities; national minorities; mass media; Turks; Tatars*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The revolution of December 1989 represented for the national minorities in Romania a redefinition from the point of view of identity (Cupcea, 2018; Bănescu, 2019; Bănescu & Ciornea, 2019). The main gain, freedom, quickly left its mark on the daily life of the ethnic communities that have set up organizations to officially represent them, including in the Romanian Parliament.

The most numerous communities in Dobrogea were and still are Turkish and Tatar. According to the 2011 census, in Constanţa and Tulcea counties there were 22,500 ethnic Turks out of a total of 27,698 declared at the national level and 19,720 Tartars out of a total of 20,282 declared at the national level. In the first census of the population conducted after December 1989, that of 1992, the figures did not differ much. At the national level, 29,832 citizens had declared themselves of Turkish ethnicity, of which

26,685 in Constanţa and Tulcea counties, and 24,596 citizens had declared ethnic Tartars, of which 24,185 were registered in Constanţa and Tulcea counties (RPL, 2011). In this context, the national leadership structures of the two communities were established in Constanţa, most of the activity taking place in this region.

### **2. TURKISH AND TATAR MEDIA**

Focused on cultural activities, the life of the Romanian ethnic communities after 1989, gravitated mostly around the representative organizations: the Turkish Democratic Union in Romania and the Turkish-Muslim Tatar Democratic Union in Romania. According to the statutes of the two organizations, their purpose is to preserve and promote identity values, in terms of ethnicity, culture, language and religion.

The two statutes also included, since the establishment of the organizations, the publishing of magazines/ newspapers in the mother tongue, the press being thus considered an important lever in the identity process. Thus, in 1990, the first issue of the publication *Karadeniz* (Black Sea) was published by the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars in Romania, and five years later, in 1995, the first issue of the *Haksnes* (The Authentic Voice) magazine appeared, published by the Turkish Democratic Union of Romania, as magazines to express the identity (Cupcea, 2017). Both publications originally appeared as a black and white newspaper. Turkish and Tatar writers, as well as young people who were to be introduced to the secrets of the press, were also found in the editorial teams that laid the foundations of the two publications. From the very beginning, the two publications appeared in bilingual format, so that access to newspaper information was facilitated by those members of the Turkish and Tatar communities who did not have a good command of the mother tongues and the majority population. This was the first signal of the opening of the representative organizations for the Turkish and Tatar communities in Dobrogea to the majority population and to the members of the other ethnic communities. The publications, both registered at the ISSN National Center, are now in public libraries, being an official source of information about the two ethnic communities.

From a structural point of view, both *Karadeniz* and *Haksnes* had, from the outset, in addition to information of general interest and interviews with community figures, permanent headings and even thematic pages: "Women's page" and "Children's page" in the Tatar community's *Karadeniz* magazine, or the page dedicated to religion or traditional cuisine section from *Haksnes* magazine. With a sporadic appearance, we also mention the appearance of supplements of the two publications, named "Çaş" (The Young Man) and "Kadınlar Dünyası" (Women's Page), of the publication *Karadeniz* of the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars in Romania, and "Genç nesil" (Young Generation), supplement of the publication *Haksnes* of the Turkish Democratic Union in Romania.

The information that can be found in the two publications since their appearance and until now refers primarily to the activity of the two organizations and the activity of their deputies. Then we find information on activities related to the two unions, respectively events whose themes are included in object of activity of the

representative organizations of Turks and Tatars in Romania. Also, another category gives information about the collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Bucharest and the Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey in Constanța. A constant presence at the activities of the two organizations, Turkish diplomats can be found especially in the publication *Haksnes* with extensive interviews or messages on the occasion of various holidays. Regarding the publication of the Tatar community, we can talk about two periods. Here, too, we met until 2012 a constant presence and large spaces allocated to the activity and messages of Turkish diplomats accredited in Romania. After 2012, however, a greater share of articles on Crimean Tatars and the Tatar diaspora, as well as international relations on the situation of Tatars around the world, can be seen. It should also be noted that the specific feature of the publication *Karadeniz*, whose writing changes from July 2016 in *Qaradeñiz* (spelling specific to the Crimean Tatar language), is the fact that since its inception, in the pages of the publication we find both articles in Tatar and Romanian, as well as in Turkish, this being a confirmation of the closer relations with the Republic of Turkey, the Tartars being also recognized as members of the family of nations of the Turkish world. Also as a particularity of the publication *Karadeniz*, we mention the generous spaces allocated to Tatar writers. In the pages of the magazine are constantly found fragments of both the literary creations of established writers of the community and the creations of young writers. The role of the magazine is thus to support literary activity and to encourage creations in the mother tongue. On the other hand, in the magazine of the Turkish Democratic Union in Romania we can see that the extensive articles are those dedicated to political analysis, especially the Romanian - Turkish bilateral relations, these being written mostly in Romanian.

Although in the pages of both publications are found in each issue articles in the mother tongue, it can be seen, however, that writings in Romanian have the largest share.

### 3. THE TURKISH BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND A NEW CATEGORY OF PRESS

Also after 1990, a new community began to be formed in Romania. This time it was about Turkish citizens, businessmen, who settled in our country, many of them applying for obtaining Romanian

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citizenship. We are talking about a completely different community from the two historical communities of Turks and Tatars in Dobrogea, but which still have one thing in common, especially with the ethnic Turks in Romania: culture and mother tongue. From the beginning, their interest in the area of the Turkish and Tatar ethnic communities can be seen. As can be seen from the articles in *Karadeniz* and *Hakses*, we note, first of all, the constant presence of Turkish businessmen in the activities organized by the two unions. Also, in the activities organized by the Turkish business associations can be seen the participation of the Turkish and Tatar unions that ensure the artistic program, so the relations between ethnic Turks and Tatars in Dobrogea and Turkish businessmen established in Romania are strengthened in particular in terms of the cultural compound (Constantin *et al.*, 2008).

The need for representation in the public space and communication was felt in the new more and more numerous community, so that the first publications appeared. In this article we will pay attention to two publications, which are, moreover, the most long-lived ones: the newspaper *Hayat*, published in Romania in 2001, and the newspaper *Balkan* – the Romanian edition of a publication that already appeared in Turkey, which was launched in our country in 2005. Both publications written exclusively in Turkish also appeared out of the need to ensure the best possible information of the Turkish business community for which access to the Romanian press was difficult due to lack of knowledge of the Romanian language. Most publications contain mostly economic information articles. However, information about the Romanian political life, about the politicians, about the Romanian-Turkish relations, but also the articles regarding the activity of the Turkish diplomats accredited in Romania have a great weight. The activity of the Turkish and Tatar communities in Romania is very little present in the pages of the two Turkish language publications. Most of the time, the articles dedicated to the two communities focus on the two deputies who represent the unions in the Romanian Parliament. A special aspect was the period 2016-2020, when the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars in Romania had no representative in the Romanian Parliament and at the community level there were some dissensions, these being the subject of articles in the publications *Hayat* and *Balkan*, the largest space allocated being in the last publication. The cultural component is present in the pages of publications only in specific cases and are related either to

important holidays marked at the headquarters of the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Romania, or to the participation of artists from Turkey in events organized in Romania. Although there is an increasing interaction with the two ethnic communities in our country, do notice a well-defined configuration of areas of interest.

The target audience of the publications *Hayat* and *Balkan* were, from the very beginning, the Turkish-speaking community in Romania. However, between 2011 and 2013, the publication *Hayat* also appeared in Romanian, with the largest share still being the articles in Turkish. The articles translated into Romanian were mainly from the field of tourism in Turkey and from that of Turkish investments in Romania. Cultural articles also played an important role. Unlike the publications of the two unions, which are financed from public funds allocated each year to national minority organizations in Romania, the publications *Hayat* and *Balkan* are financially supported by advertising contracts, which can be seen in the presence of many advertising materials, advertorial articles and advertisements, both in print and online editions.

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The publications that have been analyzed in this article can be considered niche publications. The main objective of the four publications is to inform the communities they address to, and in the case of the publications of the Turkish and Tatar unions we are also talking about the role of preserving and promoting identity values. In the case of *Karadeniz* and *Hakses* we also see a concern to strengthen the communities around the organizations that represent them. Although with a very large share of articles in Romanian, the two publications reflect the activity of the Turkish and Tatar unions, areas of interest less targeted by the general public. They come as a forum for the two communities, a space for debate and a way of promotion.

On the other hand, the publications *Hayat* and *Balkan*, although written in Turkish and intended for the Turkish-speaking community in Romania, are not only a way of communication for their target audience, but also a connecting factor with the economic, social and political life of our country.

From the analysis we could see that the two categories of communities, of ethnic Turks and Tatars and of Turkish businessmen, are organized separately and interfere only in specific situations. Their publications each have their own target

audience and own messages that require a clear delimitation of areas of interest.

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