

## PARADIGMS OF EUROPEANNESS IN THE ROMANIAN CULTURAL SPACE. CASE STUDY: BESSARABIA AND BANAT

### PARADIGMEN DER EUROPÄITÄT IN DEM RUMÄNISCHEN KULTURRAUM. EINE VERGLEICHENDE FALLSTUDIE: BESSARABIEN UND BANAT

### PARADIGMELE EUROPENITĂȚII SPAȚIULUI CULTURAL ROMÂNESC. STUDIU DE CAZ: BASARABIA ȘI BANAT<sup>1</sup>

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#### Abstract

*The aim of the paper is to study and assess the articles and programs manifesto of the identitarian discourses, published during the interwar period in the journals and newspapers from Bessarabia and Banat as discourses that reflect models and legacy of the two empires which both provinces belonged to. Cultural and social values assumed at the regional level highlight convergences and similarities, referring to the paradigm of the europeanity. These are cultural models that after being updated, give legitimacy to a cultural tradition anticipating the assumption of the Europeanness, that has been assimilated to different extents in the quoted regions.*

#### Zusammenfassung

*Das Ziel der Studie ist die Untersuchung und die Interpretation der Manifeste und der Artikel, die ideologische und ästhetische Programme gefördert haben, und die in den kulturellen Zeitschriften und Zeitungen der Zwischenkriegszeit in Bessarabien und im Banat erschienen sind, als Diskurse, die Modelle bzw. die Erbschaften der Kaiserreiche widerspiegeln, von denen diese beiden Provinzen Teil waren. Die kulturellen und sozialen Werte wurden auf regionaler Ebene angenommen und betonten die Ähnlichkeiten und die Konvergenzen mit den Paradigmen der Europäität. Es handelt sich um kulturelle Modelle, deren Aktualisierung, durch den Aufruf der Erinnerung, Legitimität einer kulturellen Tradition verleiht, welche die Annahme der Europäität voraussetzt und im unterschiedlichen Maße in diesen Gebieten assimiliert wurde.*

#### Rezumat

*Scopul studiului este cercetarea și interpretarea articolelor și programelor-manifest, a discursurilor identitare publicate în perioada interbelică în revistele și ziarele din Basarabia și Banat ca discursuri ce reflectă modelele, moștenirile imperiilor din care au făcut parte cele două provincii. Valorile culturale și sociale asimilate la nivel regional evidențiază, prin raportarea la paradigmele europenității, convergențele și similitudinile. Este vorba de modele culturale a căror actualizare conferă legitimitate unei tradiții culturale care anticipează asumarea europenității, asimilată în grade diferite la nivelul acestor regiuni.*

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**Key-words:** *Cultural Tradition, Europeanness, Bessarabia, Banat*

**Stichworte:** *Kulturelle Tradition, Europäität, Bessarabien, Banat*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *tradiție culturală, Europeanitate, Basarabia, Banat*

## **Introduction**

Approaching the tradition of Europeanness starting from reconsidering identity and alterity or otherness concepts is part of a school of research based on contributions of philosophers like Jürgen Habermas (Habermas 2001)<sup>2</sup>, Richard H. Roberts (ROGOWSKI & TURNER, 2009), which attempt to solve the problems of Europe's internal consistency and identify functional formulas for a kind of collective identity (European identity, political and cultural construct that covers an area with a highly diversified political culture). According to these scholars, the problems of internal cultural identity of Europe are determined by several factors, including the lack of democratic experience of some countries inside Europe, the Slavic origin and religious affiliation to Orthodoxy of their population. Therefore, European values of certain territories are challenged, and the gaps and differences in terms of democratic experience jeopardize Europe (whose identity crisis is noticed and assumed by researchers). The evolution of politics, ideologies that are overlapped to the eastern regions, the less functional democratic formula, as well as different issues and permanent conflicts are arguments that may dispute or challenge the legitimacy of Europeanness of certain territories.

Although in the case of Central Europe the legitimacy of its membership was not disputed (the "tragedy of Central Europe" is assumed), it is easier to deny the Europeanness of the eastern regions (because of the existence of ideologies, aggressive cultural policies – for instance, the so intensely used propaganda in the entire Soviet empire and especially on the western border of the empire).

The argument in favor of the East Europeanness assumes a return to the sources of Europeanness, involves a re-reading of the reference points of the European culture, more flexible criteria for the belonging to the European culture or matrix, which could allow an acceleration of the European integration efforts of these spaces, which have always had a complex of exteriority.

In this study we aim to formulate arguments for the legitimacy of Europeanness of Eastern regions, thus we propose to argue in favor of the regional tradition of Romanian provinces Europeanness of Romanian cultural provinces of Bessarabia and Banat. One of these Romanian cultural regions, Banat, is part of the European Union (a structure that is not only an institutional organization, but also represents a community of values, which legitimizes it), while the other Romanian cultural region, Bessarabia, is situated in different contexts, even antagonistic, along with territories that expose incompatible or opposite theories and ideologies.

We intend to demonstrate that beyond the different historical experiences, the concept of Europeanness cannot be antagonistic to Bessarabia, and in the same way that it is admitted and assumed for Banat, it can be overlapped to the former region. Romanian cultural identity of Bessarabia cannot be in opposition with the European identity.

We aim to reconsider the domestic model as being circumscribed to the Europeanness through its assumed values, since accepting differences, heterogeneity in this space can be seen as a feature of Europeanness within a different time and space interval and precedes the type of Europeanness understood in its current significance (its political connotation). It is a relevant and fertile perspective, since it allows demonstrating the hypothesis stating that in the interwar period European values were assumed, confirming in this way the identity of the European regions

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<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Habermas mentions in this context "the post-national consciousness" of the European people. The German philosopher who studied the crises of Europe and focuses on the legitimization of the European Project, formulates arguments in favor of the adoption of a European Constitution. (Habermas, J. (2012). *Despre Constituția Europei*. București: comunicare.ro.)

according to the following variables: acceptance of multicultural realities, socio-political context, functional cultural models, and the claimed traditions and identities. We also propose a reconsideration of Europeanness at a regional level, based on the recovery and valuing of the East European paradigm, which is based on the Byzantine-Orthodox culture, and considers these features as regional differences. The adoption of a wider perspective on the tradition of Europeanness meets the demand of representation of South Eastern Europe, which is exacerbated in the case of Bessarabia.

Updating the interwar identity cultural patterns in this border region, due to interferences, and to diverse cultural patterns functional during that period, is able to legitimate the reconexion to the Europeanness models and sources. The Europeanness occurs alongside the assimilation by young intellectuals of the paradigm of postmodernity in post-Soviet Bessarabia.

### **Description of the problem**

Starting from the realities of the geopolitical context, the challenges posed by the European unification project demand the re-evaluation and recovery of cultural patterns and formulas of networking validated at a regional level in the Southeastern Europe that preceded the setting up of a united Europe. From this perspective, the intercultural model of Banat – oriented to the paradigm of relationship with the West, and the cosmopolitan model of Bessarabia - connected to the Slave sources and cultural patterns, mediated by relevant formulas of the Eastern Orthodoxy, are relevant, and facilitate the understanding of the motivation or explanations of the different degrees of Europeanness and the developments and patterns of interconnection supposed by the European unification.

Although these regions were part of empires that promoted different models of civilization and distinct cultural policies – the Tsarist Empire (later the Soviet Empire) and the Austro-Hungarian Empire – there are convergences explained by the common European models. Choices, attitudes, cultural patterns and policies are circumscribed to the European paradigms that are considered valid beyond the differences, including the identity behavior. However, there are differences between the configuration of multiculturalism in Banat and Bessarabia – both of them Romanian regions marked by their border status and multiethnic realities. In Bessarabia the limits or borders of the influence of Russian culture are more difficult to distinguish as far as Russian culture claims itself to be linked to the sources of Europeanness. That is why the regional specificities - the distinctive features - can be circumscribed to the Eastern European model of Europeanness.

Integrating Europe's values, the identity that it offers confers legitimization to memberships, belongings, traditions, ideas. This is the reason of the magnetism exerted on the edges, borders, where besides claiming common sources with the Centers, the unifying tendency is manifested by assimilating the European cultural model, generous enough through integrative paradigm it contains, and which has as an effect the fluctuation of Europe's borders.

Authentic representations deficit, problems of perception (especially in the case of border, marginal areas, marginal, who had experienced the underdevelopment, delay, the situation of overlapping borders, multiple belongings and identity drift) alter the connection the European values, which exist in a latent formula, and can be identified and reactivated cultural models made before the experience of the community.

The interpretation of the representations of the East implies to interrogate the self-representation: to what extent the East assumes Europeanness, and to what extent it has the necessary resources for the approximation and the construction of the relationship with the West or has traditions which could legitimize the degree of Europeanness.

### **Conceptualization**

In order to clarify the meanings of the term, the connotations that we attribute to it in this article, the term *Europeanness* can overlap that of *European identity*. A territory is reached by

Europeanness as far as European values, belonging to Europe, European traditions and sources are claimed. Therefore, we consider the Europeanness of regions as an acceptance of the European values at a regional level. The concept of *Europeanness*, "the character of what is European" is taken from the French – *européanité* and regarding the realities that the term must cover, they vary depending on the type of approach, context etc. As we talk about European cultural values, the explanation that makes Andrei Marga is particularly relevant in order to understand the precise connotations attributed to the concept of "Europeanness": "Location in European geography and history does not automatically generate a cultural Europeanness, as well as a cultural Europeanness can be found also in countries that, strictly speaking, do not belong geographically and historically to Europe "(MARGA, 1997, 28).

### **Methodology and data sources**

In order to achieve the proposed objectives we will use two categories of resources: 1. Discourses of intellectuals from the interwar cultural mass media/ press and of post-communist / post-soviet cultural mass media/ press from Bessarabia and Banat, which focuses on identity / alterity / diversity / Europe and 2. The work of historians, sociologists and philosophers of European culture. Analysis of speeches - primary sources - allows formulating the research hypothesis that the model of cohabitation, networking, reporting to otherness, respectively assuming diversity, multiculturalism in the interwar period, reflected in the texts publishing, may be considered as arguments to claim Europeanness in this area. It is about valuing cultural elite discourses in the two regions in order to understand the attitude of the political elite in this regard.

In relation to the documentation of the second category of bibliographic resources, it is a mandatory step, since the authors are theoreticians whose texts are fundamental for understanding the ethos, ideologies, values, policies of Europe, and which, respectively, constitute the theoretical scaffolding of the European issues and mandatory bibliographic resources for the analysis and interpretation of the issue. In this context it is important to formulate the following interrogations: Can the confessional belonging to Orthodoxy and population of Slavic origins be considered as problems for Europe's internal cultural identity? Could the borders traced after the Second World War not work as delimitation lines for membership in Europe, thus excluding territories which equally claim for membership in Europe, quoting tradition and common sources?

The interwar period offers models of behavior, discourses and ideologies in order to satisfy the need of reconstruction of an authentic tradition of Europeanness in the East and its aspirations of integration and synchronization with the West, of communication and recovery of European values. From this perspective we argue in favor of the opportunity of re-readings, reinterpretations of these speeches and valuing them as an element of European tradition. Specifically, we propose a reading of these texts, programs (announcing cultural policies) as documents that legitimize the tradition of Europeanness. Identifying a discourse pattern similar to the community discourse of contemporary center of Europe in an area considered to be the edge of the European space in the interwar period, in the modernization / crystallization of the European vocation of the territory, is revealing in order to demonstrate the authenticity of the project and tradition of Europeanness. It is important as well from the perspective of the European vocation of certain spaces considered to be marginal and with a identitarian behavior or conduct that is perceived as ambiguous after the communist utopian experiment. Such models could be a solution to images crises and a possible answer to the skeptic approaches that diminish the legitimacy of Europeanness of this space.

Thus, I will focus on these demarcated aspects, which are fundamental for the understanding and formulating of questions regarding the topic. The proposed framework of questions includes the study of criteria and types of identity, identitarian concepts and discourses. Research methods used are the conceptual analysis, discourse analysis, comparative analysis, within a case study.

Interrogations are formulated both to assess and investigate to what extent journalistic texts represent or reflect the positions of regional elites in regard the claimed centers, the traditions that they value and sources to which they relates, but also how can be explained the intensity and

frequency of the questioning the issue of belonging (memberships), namely the frequency of identity discourses, which is their functionality and how the ideological dimension is updated in the articles (to the extent that it can be identified). It is also important to assess how legitimate is the elite position, and how representative; can it be guessed a dialogue between cultures or it is limited to the program level; how intellectuals are connected to the status of edge, of crossroads, and how are presented, managed, and treated the imperial legacies, whether or not are assumed or accepted the imposed paradigms, and what is the configuration of the relations with otherness/alterity.

Even if the number of publications in Russian language was overwhelming, after 1918 the number of Romanian language press increased; during this period appear publications of minorities too. Among the magazines that appear in Chisinau we cite „Viata Basarabiei”, „Gazeta Basarabiei”, „Cuvint Moldovenesc”, „Basarabia”, „Luminatorul”, „Basarabia Economică”, „Itinerarul”, „Ghiocelul”, „Furnica”, „Das Besaraber Leben” (a newspaper for the Jewish minority), „Bugeacul”. In Bălți is published „Buletinul Asociatiei Pedagogice din judetul Balti” (“Journal of the Pedagogic Association from the city of Balti”), in Orhei the magazine „Speranța”, in Soroca – the magazine „Solidaritatea”. Referring to the press in the period between wars in Bessarabia, Ioan Scurtu explains this configuration: "The press in Romanian has seen a significant increase (in number of titles and circulation), but could not achieve the print media in minority languages, especially in Russian, whose subscribers were not only Russians, but also Romanian, Jewish, German, Ukrainian etc. "(SCURTU, 2012)<sup>3</sup>. In the relations between the majority and the minority cultures in the interwar period are looming solutions for managing regional diversity.

The region of Banat became a well-known area of specialized studies as a distinct area in the Romanian cultural space (due to its status of limit, or sideline, of Austro-Hungarian Empire), and the concept of *Mittleuropean space* is used, effectively highlighting the distinctive features of this area of border. It might be bring into question also another concept that is applicable and that appoint a fluctuating space, trans-Eastern, however without being Eastern, a rather marginal East, an area of instability, which opposes to the Eastern and aspires to center.

Based on behavior identity and ideological options, the orientation towards East or West of regional elites is relevant in terms of how junction were achieved and determined the resulted option for the values enshrined in the Western European paradigm. The understanding and interpretation of the intercultural model of Banat, the programmatic cosmopolitanism of elites in Bessarabia at the beginning of the XX century cannot be interpreted or analyzed outside the context of geopolitics.

The acceptance of European values in Bessarabia (before the experience of confrontation with the totalitarian political mechanism - which appears as an alternative, namely as the opposite to the Western Europeanness, promoting different and incompatible cultural and political values) occurred in the interwar period, without disregarding the Tsarist empire legacies, and this is manifested in the identitarian formulas expressed in the arguments and speeches of intellectuals. The many variants of identity designed by intellectuals do not reflects a drift identity, but a commitment to claim a tradition for the construction of an identity that could meet the needs (demands) of this inhomogeneous region.

The case study of Bessarabia region is symptomatic for the Southeastern Europe, since this is an area where Russian influence, due to the close vicinity of Slavic cultural space, frequently considered as antagonistic to Europeanness<sup>4</sup>, mediated in certain historical intervals the contact with

<sup>3</sup> The author exposes the whole picture of the press in the interwar period: "During the interwar period the press was extremely numerous and divers. A high circulation had the journals and newspaper published in Bucharest «Universul», «Dimineața», «Curentul», but also the published in Chișinău, Bălți, Cahul, Hotin and other cities and towns of Bessarabia. The most popular ere the newspaper in Romanian și «Viața Basarabiei», «Cuvântul Basarabiei» and «Basarabia noastră», focused on the political live, including positions and opinions regarding the government activity of the local administration, and reports about the activity of national and regional political leaders.

<sup>4</sup> Although Russia claims for itself the tradition of Byzantium, the title of *The Third Rome*, and implicitly European values.

the European cultural tradition.

In order to recover the Eastern European tradition is necessary to accept (consider) the Slavic dimension of the European recognition as a pole of Eastern European culture, as a source of Europeanness - which promoted a set of values assigned to orthodoxy, which covered the need for belonging, for identity - religious, but also cultural - of the various communities in this highly inhomogeneous South Eastern area. The common European models and traditions have acquired other forms in this area through the brand of orthodoxy, building a paradigm of the East, and determined the configuration of ideologies fueling conservative doctrines. The mystical dimension of European culture can be interpreted as a result of the proximity of canonical Orthodoxy of the Slavic spiritual space, where tradition and Western models were treated in different manners. From this perspective, it is interesting to analyze how exactly the meeting between the two paradigms occurs in the Romanian cultural space: is it a "clash" of distinct civilizations, or is it a meeting between two versions of Europeanness, more precisely, of different layers and different durations of Europeanness.

## Results

The comparative perspective across regions – being marked by legacies of empires with distinct cultural policies, reflects the fact that the absence of similar Western institutions and of a variety of ideologies - some extremist or problematic - there is a Europeanness of the Romanian cultural regions, due to interference and assumed values. Thus, the interwar model predicts the European project, multiculturalism, cultural differences accepted as a feature of European space.

In the manifesto article, *A foreword*, the magazine "Life of Bessarabia" - the most important cultural magazine in interwar Bessarabia - signed by Pan. Halippa is presented the program and are announced attitudes, as well as the ideological and cultural position of the magazine that meet the demands of a multicultural space. The text reflects conceptions of identity, ways of relating to otherness/alterity, which leads to the assumption of ethnic and cultural diversity including formulas specific to the nationalist discourse on identity and which proposes specific aim, along with "guidance of the children of Bessarabia on their way towards Romanism and Romanian national state" (Halippa 1932, 2) and "creating links between the residents of Bessarabia irrespective of nationality and religion" (Halippa 1932, 2). The speech is marked by an ethical dimension, the responsibilities involved intellectual's status and quality, promoting shared values and responding thus to the acceptance of minority sensitivities, and expectations regarding claims of ethno-national identity, specific to the context of wars. The social and ideological commitment of elites is also manifested in the claim of territorial identity, along with the ethnic identity: "By all strive to do our duty to Bessarabia, to the Moldovan and other nations living together with us, for the nation state and Romanism." (Halippa 1932, 5). The text recognizes the alterity/ otherness, the legitimacy of the existence of the other, and accepts ethnic and cultural diversity of space and openness to sharing values.

Interwar intellectuals explicitly admitted the ambivalence of this space: "spiritual affinity for everything bears the stamp of Russian culture is deeply rooted in the hearts of all members of these families [families of intellectuals - our note] and is a product of tradition of Russian life before the Union. (...) ... And how tradition cannot change from one day to another, it takes a long time to wind it will feel a strong sense of renewal of the Romanian spirituality ..." (ARROW., 1934, 33-34). Here the multicultural realities are expressed in a much more open and direct way, which would legitimize the argument of the trans culturality of this cultural space, to the extent that transculturality implies acceptance of ideals that are "pointing to two or more cultures at the same time" (NEUMANN, 2005, 199) .

The promotion of civic values, of common identity along with firm options explicitly exposed in the speeches of representatives of regional elites in Bessarabia in the interwar period could be expressed in terms of an accepted intercultural program, as values that prove the Europeanness of this space. Adapting this type of discourse to post-Soviet realities (postcolonial multiculturalism)

can be accomplished by bringing into the equation the European cultural tradition that entered this space by connecting to the Romanian cultural tradition - which claims the Western paradigm of European modernity - and through the influence of Russian culture (to the extent that it is linked to European sources - the heritage of Byzantium), which brought a different kind of Europeanness in its eastern variant.

These texts reflect the functional hierarchy of values in a specified historical period whose reevaluation which operates with variables given by the historical and geopolitical context and starting from more distant sources – Slavic cultural legacies and their Europeanness compared to the Slavic Orthodoxy model with attitudes towards West - may allow new insights through the stated hypothesis about the Europeanness of the Bessarabian cultural space.

Thus, from this perspective is important to re-assess the integrating values of the region, of the tradition of interferences in a formula of recovering, beyond the changes of mentality that occurred in time, and of identity distortions. Values validated in speeches, identity behavior and representations which can be perceived in these texts are close to programmatic set of values promoted in the contemporary European discourse that assumes multiculturalism and intercultural relations as implied to the Europeanness. Valuing this model would ensure the recovery of the tradition of Europeanness of this area, by updating the former cultural and social values that later have been compromised by politicization. Changing perspectives on the heterogeneous realities occurred in the context of the need to adapt in order to preserve authentic identities during the Soviet period (extreme attitudes which can be explained in the context of cultural colonization by political connotation), and then to prevent the risk of federalization. In the interwar period, after defining Romanian state borders, when there was no more need to legitimize the Romanian belonging and cultural identity, links and approaches to foreign cultures, otherness and minority influence were accepted.

Vitalie Ciobanu expressed ideas promoted more or less explicitly in interwar intellectual's speeches, and in the programs of the interwar media. This shows in the first place the persistence of identity issues in the postwar and post-soviet period along the same lines – ideological fluctuations and benchmarks remain the same as in the interwar period. Secondly, he legitimizes the possibility of coexistence of ethno-national identity claims with European identity and sense of European belonging of Bessarabia "as the basement of its legitimized Romanian identity": "Therefore, in our opinion, there is no contradiction between the integration project of the continent and the national idea, which changes, adapts, becomes part of the same project "(CIOBANU, 2002). Vitalie Ciobanu reiterates arguments of Europeanness of this space, and the need for deeper assimilation of it, aligning this way with Romanian intellectuals who denounced the superficial mimicry, promoting the factual "Europeanization" of Bessarabia": "In view of all that, I hope it emerges clearly that we advocate for an in-depth «Europeanization» of Bessarabia. Our plea is based on a fundamental and universally acknowledged truth, that "Moldovans" (using the term in the political, not ethnic sense) are an European people, speak a language of Latin origin, have a culture that bind them inextricably to the spiritual traditions the West"(CIOBANU, 2002).

However, presenting the axiological models and alternatives axiomatic of this border region, Vitalie Ciobanu expressed differences in strongest terms, citing "incompatibility" between "two sets of values and principles", between "two worlds", incompatibilities that were less exposed in the intellectual discourses from the interwar period.

Vitalie Ciobanu present concerns and solutions similar to those of interwar elite for re-formulation of majority-minority relations, and for the integration of minorities. The expressed attitudes illustrate the strong commitment of the intellectual of this region to claim and promote identities and their growing concerns for social and political issues. Vitalie Ciobanu builds the belonging and alternatives of this marginal space in relation to the same centers: "Our feeling is that we have a choice not between Russia and Romania, but between two worlds, between two sets of incompatible values and principles: Asia and Europe, democracy and despotism, anarchy and order, legality and lawlessness, tolerance and persecution, private initiative and state collectivism. This is

the only viable way to integrate ethnic minorities in Moldova, and connect them to a common political destiny, leaving behind mutual suspicions"(CIOBANU, 2002).

Thus, Banat and Bessarabia - Romanian cultural provinces - areas that have experienced colonization, a Mitteleuropean and an Eastern and post-soviet space - whose constants are the multiculturalism, multilingualism, multi-ethnicity and the periphery status, nonetheless the two spaces present differences in manifestation of the common elements. Formulas of the multiculturalism in these regions are influenced by different political experiences: although both areas were colonized and in both territories were made mutations of populations, they were part of empires with different cultural policies. In the Romanian cultural space European values were metabolized to varying degrees, at different speeds, assuming diverse regions separately, depending on the variant of modernization and on their distinct imperial legacies respectively.

Dennis Deletant expresses the idea of the necessity to approach the Europeanness and Romania's integration – which is valid for the Romanian cultural regions too - not in terms of development, but as a "return to the European community" (DELETANT 2007), arguing that perspective by addressing the European issues starting from common sources. In Banat the heritage cosmopolitan tradition of the Austro-Hungarian Empire cosmopolitan tradition led to a permanent contact with Western civilization, and this way the acceptance of the values occurs authentically.

Eugen Lovinescu linked the modernization to the acceptance of the Western cultural paradigm (LOVINESCU, 1997). The Modernity of the Romanian cultural space cannot be considered without updating links with the European models. Timing differences in terms of modernization are thus associated with differences in the degree of Europeanness of the cultural regions, to the extent that the paradigm of modernity contains Europeanness values.

The accordance of the Eastern and Western spiritual values is different across regions. If in the other Romanian regions, modernization and westernization occurs naturally due to imperial legacies and to neighborhoods, in Bessarabia the process is marked by discontinuities.

Modernization of Bessarabia is a mediated process and presents more noticeable particularities, but still allow keeping a connection through two channels: one direct, organic (in the interwar period by restoring relations and reconnecting with Romanian identitarian center) identity recover center connections), and one mediated (through the Slavic culture, whose Europeanness, though disputed, is real).

In the Southeastern Europe, including in its Eastern region, in the Slavic space, Western models and civilization are assimilated: alongside the Byzantine tradition Russian intelligentsia claims the cultural values of the West. The modernization process occurs in this area in relation to the West, the Eastern version of modernity co-existing with conservatism as a formula of the canonical Orthodoxy which offer resistance to Western values associated with Protestant denominations.

Continuity of the South-Eastern Europeanness is expressed in the discourses of intellectuals. The concept *Byzantium after Byzantium* (Nicolae Iorga), included in the historiography discourse, send to the influence of Europeanness through the cultural values of Byzantium. Orthodoxy that marked this European cultural area was superposed from the eighteenth century on the Tsarist Empire values, which apart from pan-Slavism, was marked culturally by the European cultural influence of Byzantium. Religious identity, claimed in the biggest area of the Eastern space is the formula of Orthodox Christianity, whose distinctive feature remains the rigidity of values and the conservatism, - carries cultural values and ensures the constant connection with the European sources and traditions.

Vitalie Ciobanu explains the multicultural realities of Bessarabia as imperial heritage: "(...) the vicinity of Slavic space, the presence of important linguistic minorities, Russian cultural tradition implanted on indigenous archaic spirituality, preserved at the level of the 1912, emphasized this specificity, which included positive elements, such as fostering a cultural cosmopolitanism that survived tsarist administration, and social and ethnic extreme permissiveness



"(CIOBANU, 1999, 290)<sup>5</sup>. Vitalie Ciobanu also recognizes the multiculturalism (which is authentic, as a inheritance of Tsarist and Soviet empires), and explicitly denounce the effects of politicization and transformation of the multiculturalism into soviet internationalism.

The political connotation do not implies anymore the acceptance of common values, which explains the misinterpretation of the diversity and alterities in Bessarabia, an area where the modernization process has been discontinuous.

Both in Bessarabia and in Banat, claimed identities are marked by multiple valences – being the border areas of multiethnic entities: Bessarabia, after a century of forming part of the Tsarist Empire and later of the Soviet, and Banat - part of the Hapsburg Empire and in the second half of the nineteenth century of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

These differences, determined by two different ways of understanding and valuing of identities and ethnicity – are also based on concrete historical, objective and contextual motivations.

The manner of influence of the imperial policies was different: in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the process of modernization took place in the late nineteenth century, based on a set of values compatible with the Western canon, in contrast to Bessarabia, which after the experience of the problematic influences of the Tsarist Empire and later of integration into united Romania (Romania Mare) (where the variety of Central ideologies inhibited this province that also experimented a sort of radicalized regionalism) was exposed to the Soviet version of modernization, supporting policies of cultural colonization, involving the Russification and ethnic stigmatization and marginalization.

### **Historical minorities versus political minorities**

The way of relating to minorities, of interpreting the interferences reveals differences in the interwar elite discourses and post-war respectively.

Explaining the persistence of these distinctions implies firstly the motivation of the dissociation of the historical minorities of those constituted following a political directive and that therefore have political connotations (consequently there is a need for understanding the differences between multicultural layer in the interwar period and the post-war one, configured as a result of mutations of populations following a political strategy). In the second place, the study of paradigms (inclusive or exclusive) of the identitarian identity patterns that worked in different political contexts, the references to the Centers, the connection are constructed according to the assumed or undermined ideologies. In the interwar period the three most important minorities were Russians, Ukrainians and Jewish, mostly concentrated in urban areas. The relations of power between majority and minorities were expressed differently, were not politicized, minorities were considered historical, and integrated respectively.

### **Conclusions**

Beyond the differences, even institutional incompatibilities - to the extent that institutions are "objectification of culture" (MARGA, 1995) - it is difficult to argue in favor of the exclusion of areas that claim common sources and traditions (Byzantium). Recognition of another layer of Europeanness (the Eastern one) involves the reassessment of common historical and cultural memory by the Western side and the acceptance of diversity with a higher degree of complexity.

According to the discourses, treaties and official documents, European identity is based on values, common history and cultural traditions; it could be and actually is claimed by the Eastern countries.

Regarding the legal framework, cultural policies developed at the European Union level, these are oriented towards the respect for diversity and the enhancement of the common cultural heritage. Cultural and symbolic capital of Europe is backed up by polyphony of discourses of

<sup>5</sup> „Liberty is a frightening exersize” – interview by Tamara Cărăuș published in *Adevărul literar și artistic* of 7 and 14 April 1998 and re-published in 1999 in the book *Frica de diferență. Articole, eseuri, cronici literare. (The fear of difference. Articles, essays, literary chronicals)*.

identity that reflects diversity. Culture is presented both to argue in favor of common tradition and to expose differences. Common European identity has been undermined by political, ideological issues, and now politics states the framework defining the common identity and acknowledging and accepting at the same time the diversity in various formulations and configurations.

Consequently, ethnocentrism, which promoted cultural differences is replaced in the cultural and institutional policies by a different paradigm, which integrates and promotes complementarity. Beyond the differences, European culture is the result of cultural policies of empires that have blurred some differences and highlighted others, depending on the ideological interests (redrawing boundaries, etc.)

Ethnocentric identity discourse of the Orthodoxy with the "ecumenical" values of the West, and Orthodoxy attitudes towards sexual minorities is seen as a imperfect relation to otherness and cannot be subject to the rules of political correctness community. Traditionalism, conservatism of the Orthodox Church are elements which supplies its identity, it defines itself through the preservation of tradition. Renouncement to these elements that contradict European requirements, but define this institution would lead to its dissolution, because the dogmatic identity of the Church is given by this kind of discourse.

Thus is revealed the inefficiency of approaching this meeting in terms of a "clash" of civilizations between distinct culture of this region and the opportunity of an interpretation of the culture of this region as a space where two variant of Europeanness meet two variants, namely different layers and timing of Europeanness.

Formulating questions about the values and identities assumed in Bessarabia suppose to update the European dimension and the values of this area, to review and suppress the problematic representations through the reconfiguration of the identity and traditions path. This approach, expressed in specialist's discourses in terms of a complex of exteriority, could be solved by adapting representations and by assuming and accepting the Europeanness of eastern regions and by returning to sources, demonstrating the authenticity of common sources, of the actual patterns offered by the Eastern Europeanness, which is always connected to Western Europeanness.

Regionally, the Romanian cultural space metabolized the values of the European West to varying degrees, at different speeds, assuming diversity in different manners (depending on the variant of modernization, and on the distinct imperial legacies, but according to influences caused by cultural proximities). For multiethnic regions the European model offers solutions for networking models – the accepted multiculturalism and the promoted interculturalism: Europe's political identity legitimizes uneven regions, it becomes a supplier of legitimacy for incoming interferences.

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