

**Problems of inter-denominational cooperation in Romania
in the post-communist period**

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The church-state relation in Romania is a very hot subject in the public debates and national media coverage in the last period. Among the events that determined this revival of the issue are: opposition of the Romanian Orthodox Church to the public access to the communist secret police (Securitate) archives – especially the files that regard its clergymen; building of a national cathedral in Bucharest, or the inter-denominational dialogue concerning the restitution of church properties (especially those of the Uniate Church, but of the Orthodox Church as well) nationalized during the communist regime. The inter-denominational relations in Romania changed continuously after 1989 mainly due to the general influence of specific events like the reestablishment of the Uniate Church as a recognized church; the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1999, followed by the visit of Patriarch Teoctist in Vatican in 2002; the governmental change from 1996, which promoted bills and decisions to support the solving of property restitution issue; the decision of the government in 2004 to recognize the right of the churches involved in the problem of restitution of worship places to go in court against the Orthodox Church.

The inter-denominational cooperation in Romania exists in few but successful cases of social activities of the churches. The most successful cases are at the level of church-based NGOs. The church-based NGOs are the non-governmental organizations, part of the civil society, which were either established by churches in order to manage the social activity programs previously administered directly by the church; or developed a very close link with a specific church (or more generally, a denomination) that one can easily consider this relation as a patronage affiliation. After 1989 churches got more involved in the social problems, developing new mechanisms of pursuing these aims. Among other means, they developed NGOs that are in close relation with the church (local churches, dioceses, archdioceses, or metropolitan). The churches developed internal programs for sustaining their social activities: education focused on specializations like social work; strategies for attracting funds from the country or from abroad; all these besides the “traditional” activities of attracting funds from the believers that participate frequently in church reunions. Apart from these means of supporting their social activities churches in

Romania receive governmental funds distributed by the State Secretariat for Cults. Based on the legislative framework that regulates denominations in Romania we could classify the churches as historic churches (ROC, Catholic Church, Uniate Church and the protestant churches); and young, or new age churches (established in Romania especially in the twentieth century: Baptist Church, Pentecostal Church, Adventist Church, Jehovah's Witnesses), A third category is formed by churches that have a long tradition in Romania but are strongly ethnically based, representing a symbiosis between the church and the ethnic group (the Jews and the Muslims).

In this paper the inter-denominational cooperation is treated as part of the church-state relation because the propensity for inter-denominational cooperation is influenced by the legislative framework that regulates church-state relations. If the legislation promotes differentiation in treatment of denominations, then the denominations that are considered by state institutions as being "of lower status", might feel discouraged to engage in cooperation with denominations that have a higher status (like the one of being recognized by the government). This type of differentiation gives access to important resources only to the recognized denominations, thus frustrating the unrecognized denominations. As a result, cooperation across this status cleavage is hard to be achieved. Throughout history of Romania, even recently, lack of inter-denominational mutual acceptance, lack of cooperation and accommodation attitudes allowed, or even helped civil conflicts and intolerant policies and attitudes.

Although inter-denominational cooperation is hard to be reached, in this paper I will argue that some policy solutions are accessible for the government to encourage churches to cooperate at the level of church-based NGOs. The model is similar in some aspects to the faith-based and community initiatives developed in United States. I will discuss the differences of these two approaches later in this paper.

In this paper I will try to find the possible problems that arise when dealing with the potential for inter-denominational cooperation. These problems might raise barriers in front of inter-denominational cooperation as exemplified further. The argument is based on long interviews with experts, high-level clergymen, and policy-makers, on analysis of legal documents, and on two public opinion polls (a local and a panel national survey) conducted in 2004. From the range of problems underlined later in

this paper I will address in detail the issue of church-based NGOs and policies linked to these organizations, which are part of the inter-denominational cooperation.

Areas of inter-denominational relations

Inter-denominational relations in Romania are marked *first* of all by historic problems, manifest even before 1989. Because of space and time limits I do not intend to enter here in details about these pre-1989 problems. Although, I want to underline that the one of the problems of the cooperation is linked to the restitution of churches' property, especially the property of Uniate Greek-Catholic Church that was nationalized in December 1948 by the newly established communist regime. In spite of the negotiations inside the joint Orthodox-Uniate Dialogue Committee results are not yet visible and the two churches did not reach a mutual acceptable solution. Another important factor that impeded inter-denominational cooperation, ever since the inter-war period, is the nationalistic attitude of the Romanian Orthodox Church in issues like religious representation and church-state relations (Gillet 2001). The Romanian Orthodox Church (henceforth ROC) identifies itself with the history of the Romanian people, with its creation as a nation and later its unification in a single state. The relation between ROC and Romanian nationalism was changed after 1945, captured and used by the communist party for its legitimation. However the submission of church in front of the state (secular power) is considered to be conditioned by symphony between the state and the church – a “secular custom of submission towards the state” inherited from the Byzantine period marked by an alliance between the emperor and the patriarch. (Gillet 2001, 15)

According to Olivier Gillet (2001) the relation between the church and state during the communist period was a fully continuation of the “Caesar-pope” model of symbiosis between secular and temporal power, existent in the Romanian countries throughout history. The integration of church (ROC) in the communist regime was underlined in its new theory: “social apostolate” drawn by the first Romanian orthodox patriarch under communist regime - Justinian. This theory was aim to adapt the church to the reality of the new regime. Inspired by the soviet orthodox discourse

this theory collected a series of directions that the church should follow in the formation of its clergy (Gillet 2001, 37).

The same model was followed by the two patriarchs that followed Justinian. After 1989 ROC faced lost of internal unity as concerns the way it should address its relations with the state and with other denominations. However, the dominant pattern at the high levels of ROC as concerns the issue of collaboration with the communist regime remained the same after 1989, although several high-level clergymen (like Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu of Banat) recognized their collaboration and presented a “mea culpa” soon after the revolution. ROC continued to support and promote the idea that during the communist regime all the churches (including ROC) were in danger to be closed and that many high-level clergymen fought against it¹, even though critics and scholars (Gillet 2001) argue that ROC’s clergy pursued accommodation politics with the communist regime and even assisted benevolently to the anti-Greek-catholic communist policies.

The legislative complex that sets the framework of inter-denominational relations is not limited to a law, be it the law of cults, but is connected to a complex legislative framework, that encompasses for example the law on religious denominations, the law on foundations and associations and the law on the possibility to donate to associations and foundations 1% of the income tax that every employee has to pay to the state. Taken into account that churches established their own NGOs for representing them in social problems that cannot be efficiently dealt by church as an institution, the legislation on associations and foundations influences the factors involved in the inter-denominational relations. The legislative framework on finances influences the inter-denominational relation through the so called “one percent” campaigns that aim to attract financial support from citizens in order to support the development of the civil society organizations. As I will discuss in the second part of the paper, these campaigns would be an alternative (full or partial, depending on the radicalism of the proposed reform in the field of church-state relations) to the direct state subsidies given to the recognized churches.

¹ Recently, ROC underlined the heroic attitude of Patriarch Justinian (1948-1977) and his opposition to “the oppressive, totalitarian and atheistic regime”. (ROC Patriarchy press release no 158 from February 21st 2005)

Treating the issue of inter-denominational relations in close link with the church-state relations can be done also from the neocorporatism perspective: the arrangements between the churches and the state copy a “corporatist” framework of interaction between trade unions and the state. As a form of societal configuration, corporatism is largely viewed as a “system of interest and/or attitude representation, a particular modal or ideal-typical institutional arrangement for linking the associational organized interests of civil-society with the decisional structures of the state” (Schmitter 1974). Corporatism’s system of authority and interest intermediation is derived partly from the Catholic social thought. From the theoretical point of view one can distinguish between state corporatism and societal corporatism. The former puts an emphasis on a strong state in a regime based on authoritarian top-down organization. Societal corporatism, the second variant of corporatism, also labeled neocorporatism, is based on a bottom-up relation between interest groups, state and society, characterized by a participatory (pluralism) interest groups framework.

Societal corporatism is a mean of providing social solidarity, avoiding class conflict, and discouraging individualism among masses, while at the same time providing opportunities for participation by the masses in local, regional and functional groups. However, several factors might impede a neo-corporatist arrangement in the inter-denominational relations and the church-state relations. If the state does not involve NGOs (churches or church-based NGOs included here) in social issues, stressing a total division between church and state, like in case of France, the neo-corporatism arrangements are harder to be unveiled in the society. Other factors that question the societal corporatism, are, as Schmitter (1974, 127) underlines: the “asymmetric dependence, unauthentic and fragmented representation, weak associational loyalties, suppressed or manipulated conflict, little mutual respect among groups, no effective means of appealing to wider publics and pervasive state bureaucratic control”. Thus, churches and the church-based NGOs should organize and act as fully institutionalized organizations – in accordance with Huntington’s (1999) criteria for assessing institutionalization – capable not only of aggregating interests but also of influencing their members’ behavior and of bridging differences through collaboration with other similar groups.

The second area of inter-denominational relations is referring to internal, confessional-structural factors. The dogmatic differences between the churches, be they Christian, are always an important argument against cooperation, or even dialogue. These differences lasted from centuries and only in the last years clear steps had been taken in the direction of reciprocal acceptance between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. Even if a dialogue is set up, the differences raise important barriers in front of cooperation at the theological level. Thus, a different level of cooperation not involving necessarily dogmatic issues, might be a better solution for accommodation. The personal preferences of the leadership and the strategies the leaders adopt towards cooperation are very important, as underlined in the interviews by leaders of the Orthodox Church². Negative reaction towards proselytism is another type of structural problem against cooperation. The “other” is perceived as a potential competitor on the “religious market”. From this point of view believers are regarded as items that the church fights to keep for itself. It is not important the strategy to determine its own believers to keep their faith and religious orientation, but the strategy to impede other “competitors” to have informational access to “your own believers”. Proselytism is widely regarded as being promoted currently in Romania³. It is considered a negative strategy for attracting new believers, moreover by the historic/traditional churches, like ROC, Catholic Church, Uniate Church and the protestant churches. The neo-protestant churches, especially the Pentecostal church, view proselytism as a strategy for recruiting believers, not necessarily a strategy to blame. According to leaders of the neo-protestant churches proselytism is currently used by all the churches in Romania⁴. These opinions of the churches in Romania should be analyzed in the context of decline of (active) believers for the historical churches, and an increase in the number of the believers of neo-protestant churches,

² Interview of the author with Archbishop Bartolomeu Anania of Cluj, Vad and Feleac, August 18, 2004; and with Iustin Marchis – priest at Stavropoleos Orthodox Church in Bucharest, August 16, 2004.

³ All the clergymen I interviewed underlined that proselytising is used currently in Romania for attracting believers even from other churches. Interviews with of the author with: Archbishop Bartolomeu Anania of Cluj, Vad and Feleac, August 18, 2004; Archbishop Jakubiny Gyorgy Roman-Catholic Archbishop of Alba Iulia, August 19, 2004; Gyero David – Administrative advisor to the Unitarian Diocese of Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca, September 8, 2004; Kato Bela – Vicar Bishop to the Reformed Diocese of Cluj-Napoca, September 8, 2004; Dorin Moțoc – Orthodox Priest and Advisor for social assistance issues to the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchy, August 25, 2004; Mircea Marțian – Greek Catholic Priest and Mass-media advisor to the Greek Catholic Diocese of Cluj and Gherla, September 7, 2004

⁴ Interviews of the author with: Mihai Suciuc – Executive Director, Romanian Baptist Union, Bucharest, September 6, 2004; and John Tipei – Rector, Theological Pentecostal Institute, Bucharest, September 6, 2004.

especially after 1989. Thus, identifying a possible cause for decline of believers' number, historical churches identified also the mechanisms and the competitors that use them, blaming the strategy as being unfair and immoral. Moreover, the accuses of proselytizing of the historical churches, from the part of neo-protestant denominations, lead to conflicts between believers and clergymen of different denominations, many of them being mentioned in the Freedom of Religion reports of the State Department since 1998.

A *third* area is represented by the state financing of the places of worship. As part of the current arrangement of the church-state relations, the recognized churches are eligible to receive governmental funds not only for paying the clergymen but also for renovating and building places of worship. These sources of funding could be considered as a mechanism for differentiating not only between the recognized and the not recognized denominations, but also between the dominant church (ROC) and all other churches, as the study of the Association The Solidarity for Freedom of Conscience, Bucharest, underlined. The study reveals a high disproportion between the funds received by OC for building new places of worship, and the funds available to the second (Catholic Church) and the third historical church (Uniate Church), As concerns the taking into account their number of believers the 1992 and 2002 censuses show these statistics from Table 1. The cooperation is impeded by disproportionate intervention of the state agencies in favor of certain churches. The same study underlined that numerous churches were built after 1989 with help of institutions like penitentiaries (using a cheap if not free workforce of the prisoners), or the army (the workforce is as cheap as that of prisoners). These churches belong to the Orthodox Church, thus inducing the idea that the dominant church can benefit from any kind of help it wants from all the state institutions. In such a context, cooperation is troublesome since other churches might feel frustrated, or the Orthodox Church might feel that it does not need to cooperate with other churches in order to achieve certain interests.

Table 1. Demographics of denominations

	Believers at the 1992 census	Believers at the 2002 census
Orthodox Church	19,802,389 (86.8%)	18,817,975 (86.8%)
Catholic Church	1,161,942	1,026,429
Uniate Church	223,327	191,556
Old rite Christian church	28,141	38,147
Reformed church	804,454	701,077
Christian Evangelical Church	49,963	44,476
Evangelical Augustinian Church	39,119	8,716
Evangelical Church Synod- Presbyterian	21,221	27,112
Unitarian Church of Romania	76,708	66,944
Baptist Church	109,462	126,639
Apostolic Church of God (Pentecostal Church)	220,824	324,462
Seventh-Day Christian Adventist Church	77,546	93,670
Armenian Church	2,023	687
Jews	9,670	6,075
Muslims	55,928	67,257
Romanian Evangelical Church	Not recognized in 1992	18,178

Sources: State Department, International Religious Freedom Report; Romanian National Institute of Statistics

Besides the funds received for building new churches (about 2000 new worship places were built in Romania by the Orthodox Church between 1990-2004, and 1000 orthodox worship places are on the way to be finalized), another issue of worship places as factor that influences the inter-denominational relations is represented by the approximately 3000 uniate, catholic and Hungarian worship places that were nationalized by the communist regime. These places were given almost all to the Orthodox Church. After 1989, the refusal of ROC to return these places produced a conflictual situation unfavorable to inter-denominational cooperation. As table 2

reveals, there are strong financial ties between the state (executive power) and churches (moreover Romanian Orthodox Church – ROC)

Table 2. Funds received from the state

	2000	2004
Romanian Orthodox Church	11,000,000 USD	6,900,000 USD
Roman Catholic Church	650,000 USD	400,000 USD
Uniate Church	925,000 USD	127,000 USD
Reformed Church	280,000 USD	98,000 USD

Sources: State Department, International Religious Freedom Report

The fourth area is represented by the relations between politics and the clergymen. After 1989 many clergymen had close relations with the political life whether directly, being elected in local councils, as mayors, in county councils or as MPs; or indirectly, agreeing with the usage of religious symbols like worship places, religious services, by politicians, especially in electoral campaigns in order to increase their chances to be elected. Mass media reflected many cases of such “collaboration” between politics and clergymen⁵. Realizing that on the long term the image of the church will be negatively affected by such “collaborations” the Synod of ROC decided in 2004 that no orthodox clergy would be allowed to get involve in politics. Very few clergy-politicians decided to stay in politics accepting the penalty of being forever excluded from the orthodox clergy. The relation with politics was no more successful for the clergymen that aimed to use the links with politicians in order to solve problems like restitution of nationalized properties. Archbishop Pimen of Suceava and Radauti switched several times between accusing and greeting politicians that had at certain times the power to decide the restitution of forests to the Archbishopry. Until now Archbishop Pimen did not reach his scope concerning the restitution.

⁵ Just a few examples: Evenimentul Zilei, June 17, 1997; Ziua, March 6, 1998; Ziua, April 12, 1998; Evenimentul Zilei, April 12, 1998; Evenimentul Zilei, April 16, 1998; Evenimentul Zilei, February 5, 1999; Ziua, December 16, 1999; Evenimentul Zilei, January 30 2001; Evenimentul Zilei, December 11, 2002; Evenimentul Zilei, October 19, 2002; Ziua, September 1, 2004; Evenimentul Zilei, July 11, 1004.

The fifth area of analysis (civil society issues) is represented by the NGO's established by churches. Currently, there are more than 4,000 registered and active NGOs in Romania according to the Civil Society Catalogue published in 2000 and updated yearly by the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society. More than one third from the total number of NGOs has as declared interest and field of action the social protection. About one tenth of the NGOs have as declared aim religious issues. Half of these religious-based NGOs (about 100) endeavor social protection. However, there are many social protection NGOs that did not declare any dogmatic links, but only the focus on social protection, thus being hard to find their link with a specific church, although such links exist. Some of them developed more intensive and successful programs than the state institutions did. A few examples include, but are not limited to: Caritas, the largest NGO in Romania (from the point of view of funds, employees, no. of projects financed); Vasiliada (orthodox NGO); Christiana (orthodox NGO); Kida (reformed NGO), Prison Fellowship Romania (multi-denominational NGO).

Efficient results of the civil-society's involvement in social protection might be reached through subsidiarity, as Charles Glenn argued. The organizations of civil society, churches and their NGOs included, can get involved in activities that public decentralization cannot cope with. In his opinion, subsidiarity has the capacity to promote changes in the nature of the policies and the social services. (Glenn 2000) The explanation resides in the fact that through subsidiarity the governmental institutions attract external actors in the policy process, thus enlarging the range of factors that can influence the success of policies. Nonetheless, external institutions, especially civil society ones, can interact more informally with the direct beneficiaries of the social programs. According to Glenn, at least in the educational system subsidiarity and larger autonomy of decision of civil society institutions brings not only more efficiency, but also psychological related benefits: people tend to be more open in their relations with non-governmental institutions than with procedure-driven and formality-based state bureaucracies. Another important argument presented by Charles Glenn is that in case of decentralization within the institutional framework the main actors are the same ones that worked under strict supervision of state institutions and are acquainted with the procedures of a centralized system. Putting the weight on the same actors, when promoting the changes in systems like social protection, it

means that the accent is placed on the same energies and thus the reform cannot advance. If a system that is not effective is changed through decentralization the results are marked by the same inefficiency of the lower levels, which can protect themselves better now from change (Glenn 2000, 24). The commitment of civil society organizations can move the reform ahead, in the social protection sector. Sustaining the existence of more than one solution for the social protection should be a goal for a government. Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus underlined that a greater range of particularities in the policy sector will give the possibility for people to select the most appropriate one for their goals. (Berger and Neuhaus 1996, 206) Churches' involvement in social protection has a long tradition in Romania. They established hospitals, asylums, clinics, and orphanages that were after all integrated in the state social protection system.

However, negative effects can be identified also as concerns the involvement of churches and the church-based NGOs in the social protection issues, and community issues in general. It might be possible that church-based NGOs use their charity activities in order to promote religious beliefs and theological doctrines, even to condition their services by certain religious beliefs. Of course, the state regulations should take sides in similar situations in order to prevent such violation of rights and equality in treatment, especially when state funds are used for social services.

Churches are an important part in the process of involvement of civil society organizations in the social protection activities. They can access many resources (capital, material and human) and direct them towards social issues. As part of civil society churches have a double mechanism of getting involved actively in this sector: directly as institutions that coordinate small material aids from their believers directed towards its believers in need, or indirectly through the NGO's they create under their patronage. The latter is a more complex method of delivering public service, because requires specialized staff, drafting of strategies for collecting funds and a closer interaction with the beneficiaries.

The importance of church-based NGOs is not limited to social protection. If people with different beliefs, which do not interact on a day-by-day basis, begin to cooperate

in order to solve their community's issues, they would create, unconsciously, the conditions for toleration and acceptance of other individuals' values.

An interesting model of church-state relation with influences on the inter-denominational relations is represented by the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Program (henceforth FBCI) developed and implemented in United States of America by George W. Bush since January 2001. The Office of FBCI at the White House together with similar offices in the administration's departments is coordinating the distribution of funds to churches across United States for a specific purpose: support for the existing church programs in social protection or for establishing new such projects. In 2004 FBCI program gave to the churches more than 2 billion dollars from federal level agencies and about 50 billion dollars from the state and local levels. This financing framework does not require a church to manage the funds through an NGO, but encourages them to cooperate with other churches in similar programs. Since March 2004 the churches are encouraged to enter in partnerships with the governmental agencies in order to implement their faith-based programs. Church-based NGO's do not have access to these funds. The money cannot be used for preaching or promotion of the dogma. According to FBCI Office since the program was established new initiatives for delivering social services were established by the churches.⁶ However, there are many critics of FBCI Program. The Democratic Party does not support the transfer of federal funds to churches, considering that this breaks the division between church and state as promoted by the US Constitution.⁷ An important critique is that the program permits discrimination based on religion when the churches hire the personnel in the faith-based programs. This critique is rejected by the White House on the grounds that it cannot impose to the churches to hire people with a different denomination in programs that require a certain line of denomination; e.g. a catholic charity should have the right to hire only catholic people. Unfortunately there is no legislation to regulate this issue. Another critique raised by the Democrats is that the state is basically making a step back in the issue of

⁶ Interview with Kathy Wills, Assistant to the President of the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Office at the White House; November 17, 2004.

⁷ Interview with Katie Finn, Deputy Director of Outreach and Religious Issues in the Electoral Staff Washington D.C. Coordination Office of the Democratic Party presidential candidate, Sen. John Kerry; October 14, 2004

its involvement in social issues and it prefers to leave the churches to tackle with these difficult problems.

Map of inter-denominational cooperation

The historical experiences of inter-denominational and church-state relations have had an important externality in terms of differentiation between churches, viewed as informal perception of “the other” recognized churches in Romania. Each church tends to perceive the other churches as a competitor for believers and for resources (material, human and other resources like the weight of trust that individuals put on the churches’ messages). The state of affairs modified after 1989. Beginning with the relative opening of the “human market” for other denominations than the Orthodox one, the way that churches perceived their denominational competition was changing. A strong weight was given to the proselytism issue, as underlined above. When addressing their general position in society (relationship with the state, relationship with the population during the history, contribution to the nationhood formation) churches tend to be either very sensitive and status-quo oriented (especially the Romanian Orthodox Church), or to be oriented towards future relations with the state based on a zero starting point, on the total freedom of religions and total separation between church and state institutions.

Two main groups of churches plus an extra small and particular group, can be identified according to their position towards proselytism and more generally in terms of their position in society: the traditional churches and the newcomer churches. Traditional churches are more or less the churches that have at least 100 years of activity/existence in Romania, under the form of an organized denomination. The Romanian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, the Uniate Church and the Protestant Churches are the denominations that perceive themselves as being the historical-traditional churches. The Neo-Protestant churches (Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Christian Adventist, and the Jehova’s Witnesses) are perceived by the other churches as being newcomers and thus not having “social and national roots” in Romania. The third group of churches is formed by denominations that either have a tiny number of believers, or are non-Christian denominations, thus not being

perceived as a potential theological threat (Armenian denomination, Muslim cult, Jews, Old Rite Christian Church, Romanian Evangelical Church).⁸

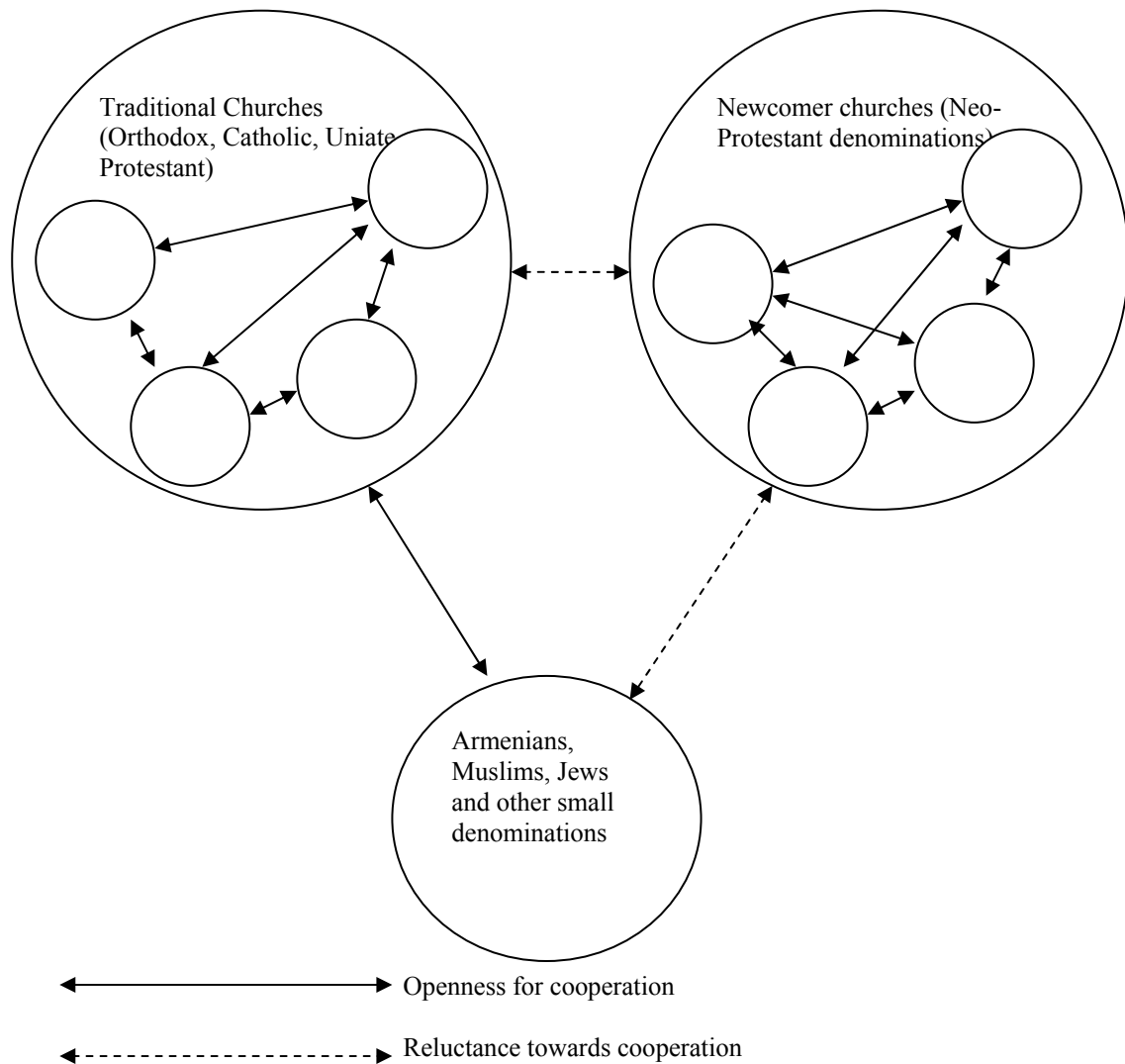


Figure 1. Map of inter-denominational cooperation

Inter-denominational cooperation tends to be present higher propensity inside the same “historical group” of churches. Being considered a member of the category with the same general label increases the chances of openness for cooperation with other members of the same group. In the same time, inter-group cooperation tends to be smaller when considering the traditional vs. newcomers denominational dichotomy. If

⁸ These groups are based on perceptions expressed by religious leaders interviewed by the author in 2004 and 2005 in the International Policy Fellowship Program.

certain group of churches is considered to act as a clear competitor in the religious/theological field, then its “members” tend to be regarded as unfit for cooperation, thus affecting the general framework favorable for inter-denominational cooperation. Non-competitive groups will be accepted for cooperation mainly because they are not perceived as a threat to the status-quo. An exception takes place on the map of inter-denominational: mainly because of the historical factors and individual clergy reticence for solving the dispute between the Orthodox and the Uniate Churches, the propensity for cooperation between these two churches is low event at the level of church-based NGOs.

Public support for cooperation. Attitudes towards church-state relation and inter-denominational relations

In May 2004 I conducted an opinion poll with the help of Bogdan Voicu and the Center for Political Studies and Analysis, of the Romanian Society of Political Science. The sample comprised 385 respondents with a margin of error of 5%. A national panel survey was organized in November and December 2004 in collaboration with Marina Popescu from University of Essex, Gabriel Badescu from “Babes-Bolyai” University and Grigore Pop-Eleches from Princeton University. The margin of error of the sample was 3% with a total of 3310 respondents for the two waves of survey.

The results of the survey in Bucharest revealed that people consider churches as an important part of the civil society. Almost half of the respondents considered that the churches should collaborate more with the NGO’s than with the political parties. Three quarters of the respondents believe that the churches should get involved in the social issues, like social protection, more that they did until now. In the mean time, three quarters underlined that the churches should not get involved in the politics. This is only an example of the strong opinions people have concerning the church-state relations. The panel study shows that 67% of respondents consider that the Churches should increase their cooperation with the NGOs, while 78.1% consider that the Romanian Orthodox Church should get more involved in the social protection issues. In the same time, 76.1% of respondents consider that the churches should

cooperate in order to solve community problems and social protection issues. At the level of propensity of being open towards personal cooperation with individuals of other religious denomination, 49.2% of Romanians would cooperate in community problems without taking care of religious differences. This is consistent with the large proportion of respondents (75.3%) that are tolerant towards people with a different religious denomination and would accept them as neighbors.

Table 3. Attitudes on church-related issues

79.9%	Panel	Trust in church	Accept neighbors with different religion	Panel	75.3%
72.8%	Bucharest				
76.1%	Panel	Churches should get involved in social issues	Individual cooperation in community problems	Panel	49.2%
75.1%	Bucharest				
67%	Panel	Churches should cooperate with NGOs	Support for cooperation between churches	Panel	61.1%
47.2%	Bucharest				
62.2%	Panel	The state should finance churches	Churches should auto-finance	Panel	30.7%
61.9%	Bucharest			Bucharest	34.2%

Currently, inter-denominational cooperation is the exception not the rule. Churches are involved individually in disparate social projects. There is a lack of coordination between government (central or local), churches and other civil society organizations, for integrating the services to the needs of the community, in order to maximize the efficiency. As concerns public opinion, there is an overwhelming general trust in church. 79.9% of respondents in the first wave of the panel study are trusting church in general, while 72.8% of the respondents from the survey in Bucharest trust in churches. No other institution has reached such high levels of trust, except the army. As well, public support for interdenominational cooperation is at high levels, as the public opinion polls revealed. There is a lack of mass-media interest towards public involvement of churches in social issues – virtually there is no reflection in mass-media of successful stories (Caritas, Vasiliada, Prison Fellowship, Stavropoleos + Concordia). The churches and their NGOs often are missing a strategy to promote their programs and results.

Almost at two thirds (26%) of the respondents had a successful experience in general cooperation on issues of common interest, while the potential for future cooperation, especially on local community issues is even higher, reaching almost 50% of the respondents. There are no statistically relevant differences in terms of propensity for cooperation at the level of different religious groups. Thus, we might conclude that individual openness towards cooperation is not influencing negatively the inter-denominational cooperation, and that the reticence at the level of clergy might be explained not as a pressure from the believers but as a personal option of the clergy, and/or a top-down non-cooperative influence in churches with strong hints at the level of clergy hierarchy⁹.

Current public policy on inter-denominational relations and policy alternatives to improve cooperation

The current situation concerning the place of churches in civil society is characterized by a lack of clear legislative framework. The old law of religious denominations dates back to 1948. After 1989 many drafts of a new law were discussed by churches and officials of the State Secretariat of Religious Denominations, but, at best, a draft of Law on Religious Freedom and Status of Denominations will be submitted to the parliament in November this year, as the new Secretary of Religious Denominations stated in March 2005. The draft was very criticized by different experts and it is expected to be highly debated in the parliament.¹⁰ The main critique resides in the fact that the law continues to differentiate between recognized and non-recognized churches, thus braking principles of freedom of association and religious ideas stated in the constitution.

Church-based NGOs have a great potential of being more involved in the “secular issues” like social protection, then they did until now. The state institutions developed partnerships with these church-based NGOs in social issues, and in many cases they did it effectively.

⁹ In the interview I took the different clergy, a widespread opinion was that one of the most influencing factors for non-cooperative inter-denominational relations is represented by the clergy. They are often behaving as if the inter-denominational relations might be only a win-lose game.

¹⁰ Gabriel Andreescu “Spre crearea unui stat ortodox roman?” March 2004, www.humanism.ro

The principal stakeholders interested in the inter-denominational relations and cooperation at the level of church-based NGOs are:

- The churches
- The central government
- The local government
- Non church-based NGOs

The current public policy is characterized by scarce (directed without specific aim), random (without clear grant giving rules) and biased (criticized of being directed moreover towards ROC's projects) support of state for churches' social protection projects. Although a current regulation permits citizens to give 1% of their income to NGOs, churches are not eligible to receive such funds because they are not regulated by the law of NGOs, invoked by the legislative when adopting the "1% law".¹¹ The theoretical financial potential available to NGOs by this new regulation is about 20 millions euro, while, based on the similar experiences in Hungary or Slovakia, if about 25% of the people donates 1% of their income, NGOs might receive about 5 million euro taking into account that only half of the Romanians have a second job and thus are required to submit an yearly balance fiscal form to the fiscal administration.¹² Until now churches have not expressed any concern about their exclusion from the target of 1% law. However, it is very probable that, after the first year of application of this law, the churches would realize the great potential for receiving money through this program and push the government to change the regulations in order to allow churches to compete for these funds. Alternatively, they could establish more NGOs in order to receive these donations.

Nonetheless theoretically it would be an important increase in churches' sources of funding and it would support the idea of changing the current regulation concerning state funding for churches. As I will propose below, this change might be accompanied by new regulations concerning direct funds that the government gives to

¹¹ For details concerning 1% regulation see www.unulasuta.ro. For a detailed comparative legislative framework in East Europe see www.onepercent.hu.

¹² www.unulasuta.ro

churches, in the direction that part of these funds should be given on a project proposal-based criteria and involvement in social issues.

As concerns the social protection, currently the large majority of these problems is managed only by state. As I mentioned above, NGOs, be they church-based or not, are getting involved more and more in social work projects and other activities regarding social protection. However, as proved by post-1989 experience the government did not manage to tackle the social issues. Thus, it is necessary to allow for subsidiarity of the social programs. Moreover, it would be more efficient to support the partnership between NGOs that are involved in social issues, between churches, and between these two actors and the governmental agencies.

Conclusions

In a changing environment of church-state relations in Romania, the inter-denominational cooperation is still limited at a formal dialogue between high-level clergymen. Nationalism, unbalanced and not transparent funding of churches by the government, leadership personal interests, un-orthodox relations between politics and churches, the slow development of NGOs related to churches and their access to governmental funds, represent several areas of factors that influenced, until now negatively, the inter-denominational cooperation. Although citizens' attitudes are congruent with an increase of involvement of churches in issues like social work, with cooperation between churches for solving community issues, and with a certain degree of toleration necessary for cooperation, the inter-denominational cooperation would need the support of state through certain regulations that change the current access to governmental funds and encourage the creation of more church-based NGOs and of modular collective action (understood here as ad-hoc cooperation between church-based NGOs for solving common problems at the level of local community).

In order to increase inter-denominational cooperation, the government should diversify the funding for churches, splitting the current framework in two parts: direct

funds on proportional basis and direct funds based on program projects of delivering social services. With this second framework the government has the possibility to encourage the public-private partnership at the level of church-based NGOs (inter church-based NGOs cooperation and cooperation between government agencies and the church-based NGOs). A third source of funding should be accessible through the 1% regulation.

The theological factors do not favor inter-denominational cooperation: the gap between the churches was proved very hard to be filled using the tolerance message based on dogmatic similarities and historical common roots. However, the modular collective action, replacing the centralized inter-denominational relations might offer a feasible solution for the scarce collaborative experiences at the level of churches. Building the framework for inter-denominational cooperation at the level of church-based NGOs, might put the bases for more tolerance in society, while the collaborative experience could offer the solution to the current community problems, under the form of ad-hoc modular collective action.

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