

10<sup>th</sup> IACCM Annual Conference and 3<sup>rd</sup> CEMS CCM / IACCM Doctoral Workshop,  
University of Ruse, Bulgaria – 29 June – 1 July 2011  
**CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION:  
Cometences and Capabilities**

**UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF CULTURAL DIALOGUE IN BULGARIA, ROMANIA  
AND HUNGARY  
(THE CASES OF CLUJ-NAPOCA /KOLOZSVÁR/ AND BRIE – RUSE – GIURGIU)**

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The purpose of this paper is to analyze how the policy in the sphere of higher education in the new EU member states has markedly improved their interstate relations and made their contribution to the preservation of cultural and language traditions in trans-border regions populated by national minorities. The language and minority policy in Europe is enshrined in the European Framework Convention for Trans-frontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities of 1980 and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of 1992, both under the supervision of the Council of Europe. There is no clearly outlined definition of the concept of 'national minority' as a European legal norm because it is generally defined by the domestic law of the respective European state. Still we can find some of its characteristics in Recommendation No1134 on national minorities (1990) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE):

*...” separate or distinct groups, well defined and established on the territory of a state, the members of which are nationals of that state and have certain religious, linguistic, cultural or other characteristics which distinguish them from the majority of the population...”*

Also:

- i. national minorities shall have the right to maintain and develop their culture ;
- ii. national minorities shall have the right to maintain their own educational, religious and cultural institutions. For this purpose, they shall also have the right to solicit voluntary financial and other contributions including public assistance ;
- iii. national minorities shall have the right to participate fully in decision-making about matters which affect the preservation and development of their identity and in the implementation of those decisions ;
- iv. every person belonging to a national minority is required to comply with the obligations resulting from his citizenship or residence in a European state.<sup>i</sup>

Another definition of the *national minority* concept is given in Recommendation 1201 of the European Parliament (February 1, 1993) which states that a national minority are a group of citizens of a given country who meet the following five requirements:

- a. *reside on the territory of that state and are citizens thereof ;*
- b. *maintain longstanding, firm and lasting ties with that state ;*
- c. *display distinctive ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics ;*
- d. *are sufficiently representative, although smaller in number than the rest of the population of that state or of a region of that state ;*

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*e. are motivated by a concern to preserve together that which constitutes their common identity, including their culture, their traditions, their religion or their language.<sup>ii</sup>*

At the Council of Europe's First Summit in Vienna (October 1993) heads of Council of Europe member-states offer yet another definition of 'national minority' although this time the approach to its interpretation is more tentative and bound to the integrity of the respective country in Europe:

*"The national minorities which the upheavals of history have established in Europe should be protected and respected so that they can contribute to stability and peace.*

*In this Europe which we wish to build, we must respond to this challenge: assuring the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities within the rule of law, respecting the territorial integrity and the national sovereignty of States. On these conditions, these minorities will make a valuable contribution to the life of our societies.*

*The creation of a climate of tolerance and dialogue is necessary for the participation of all in political life. In this regard an important contribution should be made by regional and local authorities.*

*In their actions, States should ensure the respect of the principles which are fundamental to our common European tradition: equality before the law, non-discrimination, equal opportunity, freedom of association and assembly as well as to participate actively in public life.<sup>iii</sup>*

The question of the language policy to minorities and higher education is to a certain extent in the hands of the member-states themselves since both the European Framework Convention for Transfrontier Cooperation between territorial Communities or Authorities and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages , give a lot of opportunities for creative interpretation and implementation.

The target of my research are two educational institutions "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, and the joint Bulgarian-Romanian venture BRIE – Ruse/Giurgiu , located in two neighboring towns on the Danube River, the first one Ruse in Bulgaria, the latter- Giurgiu in Romania.

"Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania is the sole higher educational institution in the region of South-East Europe offering instruction in three European languages (Romanian, Hungarian, German) parallelly and independently in almost all of its degree courses. The paper will make an attempt to outline the prerequisites for the development of such an educational institution persistently following the language policy of both the Council of Europe and the EU by looking back at the history of the university itself and giving reasons for its present day model of functioning. Through these concrete case studies of language policy in the sphere of higher education we can have the chance to examine why and how neighbourhood policy between Romania and Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria has recently operated.

The University of Cluj – Napoca is an extremely interesting example for successful and good educational practices in a trans-border region with a substantial language minority well aware of its Hungarian identity.

The history of minority struggle and tension between the Romanian state and the Hungarian minority in Transylvania dates back to the time of the First World War, after the Treaty of Trianon(1920) was signed and Transylvania was ceded to Romania. During the

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Second World War the region returned back to Hungary for the time of the warfare but in 1947 it was again ceded to Romania together with its Hungarian population. Evidence shows that Romania and Hungary started competing for Transylvania as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century which means that minority problems were always there but statistical data proves that it developed as a territory which was initially linked with Hungarian history.

In his lecture "The Second World War. Consequences and Evaluation delivered at an International Scientific Conference on the last world war in 2005, Sofia, Bulgaria, the Hungarian scholar from Cluj-Napoca, Mihai Zoltan Nagy reminds us that *"during the twentieth century the fate and status of Transylvania gives more than one potential reason for Romanian-Hungarian conflicts or turn Transylvania into a region of local tensions. The decisions determining where this region should belong have always influenced the power ratio in Europe where great powers were the domineering factor in determining the fate of Transylvania"*. Until 1974 Hungarians constitute a majority in the region but today the ratio between Hungarians and Romanians is approximately 18% to 79% in favour of the Romanians. The above facts give an answer why I have chosen this particular university as part of the European educational space for the purpose of my paper.

The University of Cluj-Napoca or "Babeş-Bolyai" University – Cluj-Napoca suffered a lot of changes and metamorphoses till the moment it started functioning along present day lines. The numerous attempts to sustain academic activity in Cluj always faced barriers for political and historical reasons. It all started in the far off 1581 when the Transylvanian Prince Stefan Batory founded the Jesuit College in Cluj. Cluj is also the birthplace of one of the most popular and successful Hungarian Kings, Matias Corwin (1443-1490), who encouraged the development of the arts in the whole territory of Hungary. From that time on the educational institution was transformed into a number of other educational institutions such as Collegium Academicum (1622), the Jesuit Academy(1688), the Royal Academic Lyceum (XVIII century) with the newly founded Law and Medical faculties. After the Agreement of 1867 when Transylvania became again a part of Hungary, it was clear that Hungary needed more universities out of Budapest. Thus Bratislava (Pozsony)and Cluj (Kolozsvar) were planned as new university towns. Kolozsvar, the capital of Transylvania, was selected as a most suitable place for university education for a number of reasons. It was the seat of Transylvanian Museum Society whose library and other collections plus the already existing Law and Medical faculties were a good academic foundation for the development of higher education in the region. Thus the year 1872 marked the official opening of the Kolozsvar University with its 4 faculties: The Arts Faculty, Mathematics and Natural Science Faculty, Law Faculty, Medical Faculty. From 1881 the institution used the name of the Hungarian Royal University "Jozsef Ferenc". At the end of the First World War when Austria-Hungary turned into a loser-country and expected its partitioning, Kolozsvar University was transferred to Budapest (1919) and then to Szeged – in 1921 where it put the foundations of today's Szeged University. At the end of the war Cluj witnessed the opening of a new, Romanian university called after the name of King Ferdinand I. It is interesting to note that the new institution allowed a Hungarian branch in its structure headed by the literary man and linguist Georgy Kristof. In those days only theology was studied in Hungarian. During 1940 when the First Vienna Award gave Transylvania back to Hungary, the Cluj educational institution was moved to Sibiu and the Hungarian university is transferred from Szeged to Cluj.

### **The university in Cluj under communism**

From June 1<sup>st</sup> 1945 following the governmental decision of Prime Minister Groza the university moves back from Sibiu to Cluj, functioning in two directions with a statute of separate institutions – Romanian and Hungarian. Under communism the university

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expanded but it also felt the unprecedented ideological pressure of the new Romanian leadership which allowed the appointment of lecturers without any academic experience. In 1947 the ideological attack on academia was crowned with the reorganization of the university along the Soviet educational model. In 1958-1959 the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party decided to unite the Romanian and Hungarian subdivisions of the university into one in accordance with the international antinationalist and antiseperatist feelings in the Eastern Bloc. That's how "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca appeared, named after two renowned scholars – the Romanian doctor, Victor Babes (1854-1926), and the Hungarian mathematician, Janus Boylai(1802-1860) and where Hungarian remains the language of instruction.

The peak of its expansion and development the university reached in 1971, the time of ripe socialism. In those days it had 14 438 students distributed in eight faculties. In it the lecturers of Hungarian origin constitute 24% or 194 people. During the cultural revolution of Ceausescu (1972) a lot of degree courses were removed and the number of students speedily went down. The academic 1989/1990 is the worst for the period with only 3 007 students enrolled. Only 661 of them are Hungarians (22%). For a couple of years the university managed to restore its former shape relying on new plans for degree courses such as European Studies, courses for Library and Social workers. Four theological faculties were founded oriented to the most popular Christian religions – Eastern Orthodoxy, Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Reformist Theology. There began large scale structural projects. Postgraduate education was at its height in 2000. Since 2005/6 the institution has adopted the three stage Bologna system of education.

**How Romania and Hungary benefited from their rational language and minority policy?**

The European Framework Convention for Trans-frontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities open to signing on May 21 1980 was in power on December 22 1981. So far it has been ratified by 26 countries and signed by 7 other member-states. Bulgaria ratified this convention by a law (See State Gazette No114 of October 2, 1998). It is therefore important whether Hungary and Romania have ratified it. According to this Framework Convention trans-frontier cooperation contains two major components:

- 1) harmonization (i.e. mutual consultations, exchange of information, discussions, joint research and coordination);
- 2) agreements and organizational documents (i.e. between the states and between the territorial communities or authorities of neighbouring countries).

It is good that language and minority policies in the EU are additionally supported and closely bound to the European Framework of Transfrontier Cooperation (1980) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992). Each member-state is obliged to sign these two key documents in order to harmonize the opportunities for free movement of people, commodities and intellectual labour and to facilitate the development of backward regions in the community inhabited by minorities or located near a border area. That is therefore the way to give opportunity to free initiative of separate educational and economic institutions. In the case of Cluj-Napoca the existence of the university there is built on the basis of these two above mentioned documents. Today the university is actually trilingual and the reasons for that might be the following: the availability of historically conditioned Hungarian minority in Transylvania; Romania's responsibilities before the EU during the pre-accession negotiations about the equal opportunities for the preservation and the distribution of minority languages on the territory of the EU; reinforcement of good neighbourly relations between Romania and Hungary to overcome the Ceausescu legacy of Romanisation and the tension behind the modern

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development of Transylvania; the wish of Romania to conduct a speedy integration into the EU. It is important to mention that regardless of the fact whether we speak about a minority group or not, the population of Transylvania is of great importance to the socio-economic development of Romania as both a demographic potential and geographical location closest to Central and West Europe. This has a benevolent influence on the cultural and historical memory of the region and the further integration of minorities into the development of the national economy which is exclusively important for the oeral development of Romania. Whether Hungarian or not, the inhabitants of Transylavania are Romanian citizens and are not less important for developing the potential of the Romanian nation. This explains why the Romanian government tolerates the prosperity of the region in relation to higher education conducted in two or more languages since this can make it possible for the economically active part of the population to take part in the construction of the Transylvania region.

At the same time following the spirit of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages of the Council of Europe Romania contributes to the preservation of both cultural diversity in Europe and the pacification of a minority population which has not stopped voicing its minority demands. According to the Charter the teaching and studying of a regional or minority language in all educational stages should have a leading role in its application.

Being trilingual, the university in Cluj-Napoca fully meets these criteria to serve two minorities(Hungarian and German) and a Romanian majority. Article 14 of the Charter encourages trans-border exchange and cooperation in all their forms: bilateral and multilateral agreements in the sphere of culture, education, information, professional training and postgraduate studies without undermining the integrity of the country of the majority. So far it has become clear that the very existence of Cluj-Napoca University in its present day form is obviously motivated not only by the willingness of the Romanian state to preserve the culture and language of the Hungarian and German minorities in Transylvania ,but also by its genuine wish to meet the requirements for EU membership and fully integrate the university into the system of EU higher education.

**Should there be an alternative Cluj-Napoca University supported by the Hungarian minority?**

When Chaushescu's government prohibited the usage of Hungarian language the number of Hungarian speaking university students decreased. This is a sound reason for the Hungarian minority after 1989 to set up an Association for the foundation of Bolyai University. The association is a non-governmental organization of Hungarian lecturers, students and intellectuals in Transylvania aiming to return the university in Cluj to the Hungarian minority in the region with Hungarian as the major language of instruction in higher education. There follows a conference – the first Conference on Higher Education for minorities in 2005. Since then the number of association members has risen and is still rising. This non-governmental organization has far reaching goals:

- its mission is to give back the university in Cluj to the Hungarian minority by popularizing the problem on an international level;
- by attracting international and minority support for the cause;
- by restoring Hungarian language as a language of instruction in secondary education and the Hungarian symbols and monuments in Transylvania.

For better or worse, the Associaton has not registered any serious success in its minority goals to obtain the right to its own university. There are no indications on behalf of the Romanian government that it will permit the separation of the Hungarian element from the

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university in Cluj-Napoca. It's worth noticing that the 'benevolent' changes in the Cluj – Napoca University started after 1989 when the Hungarian degree courses were restored and their number rises with every academic year. Since 1993 Hungarian speaking students can apply separately from their Romanian speaking colleagues competing for 300 vacancies. Then followed an entrance exam in Hungarian. Another good indicator for minority tolerance is the gradual rise of the number of lecturers with Hungarian language. In 1990 they were only 90 full time lecturers and now they are approximately 400. Still the body of Hungarian speaking lecturers consider this number insufficient and will be happy to increase it.

"Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca is unique with its 61 degree courses taught in the Hungarian language. The Romanian division of the university has 43 000 students (out of which 1 500 of Hungarian origin) and statistics for 2008/2009 shows that its Hungarian division has 7 423 Hungarian speaking students. Today "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca is a leader university for the Hungarian speaking minority in Transylvania having produced a lot of high quality specialists in the sphere of journalism, economics, theology, etc. The language of academic research is again Hungarian. The university offers over thirty master programmes with opportunities for doctoral research conducted in Hungarian. Since the Hungarian lecturers and students are minority they create their own associations or organizations which actively support education in Hungarian language, work on projects that allow them to obtain financial assistance from the EU and Hungary.

**What must we know today about "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca?**

It is both an educational and research institution of the Humboldt type working in accordance with the European Credits Transfer System since 1998 and the Bologna System since 2005. University leavers can get their higher education diplomas in two languages – Romanian and one world language.

To conclude the case of "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca we can say that it is an interesting example for successful forms of cooperation on an academic and societal level between two nations with rich and complex history. The creation and functioning of the university in its present day form date back to the time when communist states followed the policy of supranationalism in all spheres of life and according to which the internationalism of the communist idea was more important than nationalism. However this was changed during the rule of Chaushescu when Romania adopted the so called aggressive nationalism towards its Hungarian minority. Actual cooperation between the Romanian majority and the Hungarian minority started after 1989. Thanks to its involvement into the European Credit Transfer System in higher education and being faithful to the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, the university is constantly improving and reforming itself. Both Romania(1998) and Hungary (1993) exert effort to accept laws concerning internal and external minorities. What's more the Hungarian minority has set up an independent organization of the Hungarian minority to struggle for and get back their Cluj Napoca university (so far unsuccessfully) as a guarantee of preserving their national identity. We cannot reject that the Hungarian minority is sufficiently well represented on institutional level in the region. It is supported by the academic community of the Hungarian division of the University in Cluj-Napoca. This is an example of good will cooperation between the two EU member-states Romania and Hungary. The mere existence of the university is an indicator that integration between minority and majority runs more smoothly than before, that there is a well developed element of tolerance that turns the institution into source of relative peace and serenity for

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the Hungarian minority which has not forgotten the coercive measures the Romanian government used to call integration. Such coercion , if it were to happen today, Hungarians in Romania would simply call Romanisation.

**BRIE**

Let us have a look at another educational institution whose task was never to alleviate minority problems but to create an atmosphere of loyalty to and trust in EU values. I would call BRIE a ray of hope and godly light since it is again an educational centre this time located on the border between Bulgaria and Romania.

**BRIE – a brief history**

The Bulgarian-Romanian Interuniversity Europe Centre is a project in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe . As such it was initiated by the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) at the end of 2000.

Since 2002 the Bulgarian-Romanian Interuniversity Europe Center has constituted a cross-border educational network with the goal to actively make a contribution to the actual and future challenges of the region.

Against this background, BRIE is firstly aiming at developing human capital. The region needs professionals, who will be able to prevent from destruction and start building the region anew. They will have to concentrate on projects and overcome the huge social and economic disparities with the other parts of Europe.

On the other hand, the region needs people, who have experienced togetherness and friendships with people from other states in their university lives. Such people are more likely to overcome narrow-minded national thinking and combine the commitment to the region with its integration into the European Union.

The raison d'être of BRIE is the argument, that change in the region could only be driven by a new generation of people. These young professionals should possess professional competences, a culture of cooperation and the awareness, that societal development in Europe is based on values, related to:

- economic growth, jobs and prosperity
- democratic structures and societal participation
- ecological and global responsibility
- the reduction of stereotypes and peaceful coexistence

Having this in mind, BRIE enables to overcome borders and turn education into a driving force.

Unlike the university of Cluj-Napoca BRIE has turned into a purely supranational structure whose major goals are to train high quality human resource , ready to work in a competitive European environment, to inculcate in its students European ideas and values, to gradually melt any barriers to successful communication between the Bulgarian and Romanian divisions of BRIE. The legislative framework "EU- BRIE" is not to reconcile Bulgarians with Romanians because of past or present day existing prejudices but to intensify integration between the two countries which have never had conflicts similar in intensity to those between Hungary and Romania. It is interesting to note how the cultural and historical legacy of the region including the three member-states defines its educational goals. Being an important crossroads Romania benefits a lot from its strategic position. It confirms its position of a country creating a good balance between ethnic peace, European integration and the defense of its national interests. In all cases Romanian citizens , including those from Transylvania and the lower Danube may have their educational interests oriented to those two educational institutions. Both BRIE and Bulgaria, as a co-initiator, have a realistic vision of the future development of the EU and

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the Danube Region by supporting the education and training of local human capital ready to implement its international experience for the benefit of the region.

**Present day activities.**

Apart from the two master courses BRIE is responsible for a number of additional activities such as projects and events organized for the students. An example of good practice are the summer schools within the institutions of the EU. I myself had the chance to be involved in a such a summer event. Most important for the proper functioning of the institution are the three pillars of BRIE.

**The three pillars (Ps) of BRIE**

The geographical position of Giurgiu and Ruse stands for the spirit of the coalescence of today's Europe. Although the Danube River has served as a dividing line between Romania and Bulgaria from a historical point of view, this strategic location has always been shaping the lives of the people on both banks of the Danube and the development of the region.

Today, this common sense of the people is risen again in order to achieve the vision of a common European future. The borderline loses its dividing effect and is now becoming an EUROREGION. As a territory of unified infrastructure and free movement, the region is not only an important connection of waterways and roads but also a symbol of mutual economic, political and social development.

The Bulgarian-Romanian Interuniversity Europe Center (BRIE) is one of the first signs of this EUROREGION, promoting regional cooperation and the process of European integration at the same time. By bringing together representatives of science and industry, BRIE represents a cross-border educational network in South Eastern Europe driven by the Academy of Economic Studies Bucharest, the "Angel Kanchev" University of Ruse as well as various German universities.

The identity of this network is based on three pillars (3Ps), which are incorporated in the BRIE logo:

- BRIE is a follower of the Bologna process and belongs to the European educational area (inter-university Partnership);
- BRIE contributes to the education of a new generation of professionals, committed to the European integration, to the region of South Eastern Europe and to the border area at the Danube bridge (university- professional practice Partnership);
- BRIE interacts with businesses, politicians, public administrators, NGOs and the media to respond to societal needs (university - public - private Partnership).

The organizational structure of BRIE (Board, Commission, Advisory Board) is also international in nature:

The BRIE Board consists of the Rector of Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies (Prof. Dr. Ion Gh. Rosca), the Rector of University of Ruse (Prof. Dr. Hristo Beloev), Director of BRIE centre at Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies (Prof. Dr. Constantin Apostol), Director of BRIE centre at University of Ruse Ruse (H.A. Prof. Mimi Kornazheva). The Board is chaired by one of the Rectors of the Universities and rotates annually. Members of the BRIE Commission are the BRIE-Ruse and BRIE Giurgiu offices as an executive body (Directors H.A. Prof. Mimi Kornazheva / Prof. Dr. Constantin Apostol, Deputy Directors Prof. Dr. Juliana Popova / Dr. Iulian Intorsureanu, office manager).The Commission is chaired by one of the Directors of the BRIE centres and rotates annually.



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The decisions are being made within the international environment of all-partner-universities' representation. President of the Advisory Board: Prof. Dr. Rita Süssmuth, former President of the German Federal Parliament and former Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Women, Youth and Health. <sup>iv</sup>

**Comparison of the two educational institutions.**

<b>Name of Higher Educational Institution</b>	<b>Historical background and rationale</b>	<b>Structure and functioning</b>	<b>Number of degree courses and students</b>
BRIE	Development of Euroregions in the EU	Simple and convenient structure, in accordance with the size of the higher educational institution which supports it, similar to the structure of the University of Cluj-Napoca	Two master programmes plus extracurricular work. No faculties.
University of Cluj-Napoca	Maintaining the ethnic peace and stability in the region of Transylvania	A more complex structure but convenient and in accordance with the size of the university – three divisions according to the language of instruction (Romanian, Hungarian, German). The rectors, deans and heads of departments of the university are linked with the respective language division.	21 faculties in all fields of science with the exception of medicine.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion I would like to say that the development of Euroregion “Danubius” as well as Transylvania entirely depends on the political will for the implementation of EU legislation. Yet political will is helpless without the support of civil society and the academic community. It is a fact that both educational institutions started changes urged by both academics and their respective university administrations. The example these two institutions set is extremely important because it not only clearly demonstrates the direct implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the European Framework Convention for Trans-frontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities, the Strategy for the development of Euroregions but also the maturity of the societies in these three countries when it comes to the solution of complex issues such as the preservation of a minority in a way that all parties involved can benefit from the positive outcomes reached. For an openly international project like BRIE it is important to note the new

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understanding of international cooperation in a totally new context, different from that of the past. Finally, I feel tempted to give my personal opinion on the issue. As a person who was brought up in a region linked with BRIE I admire the maturity and practical attitude in the behaviour of the two educational institutions which defend in the best possible way the interests of their citizens and students, care to build up bridges between people and countries, an approach that is much more efficient and successful than any of the local or international political campaigns attempting to do that.

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Notes:

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<sup>i</sup> <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta90/EREC1134.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta93/EREC1201.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ena.lu/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://brie.uni-ruse.bg/en/page>

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