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# WHY POMAK WILL NOT BE THE NEXT SLAVIC LITERARY LANGUAGE

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## *1. Introduction*

Following the major political changes in the early 1990s and the Yugoslav wars, the map of the Balkans has been profoundly reshaped. Based on a complex set of religious and ethnic criteria, new states have been formed. In most cases, the independence of these states has been closely linked to the political will and subsequent action to create new literary languages in accordance to the ‘one-state–one-language’ model. Indeed, since the nineteenth century, the encoding of a standard literary language is perceived in the Balkans, like in other European countries, as inextricably linked with the identity of a nation or ethnic group; see among others HAUGEN (1966), WRIGHT (2004), JOSEPH (2004), EDWARDS (2009), GREENBERG (2008).

Among the least vocal political movements for minority rights recognition in the Balkans, one can single out the Pomak movement in both Greece and Bulgaria; see support statements by the European Free Alliance.<sup>3</sup> A similar lack of political activism is reported for the Pomaks who are settled in Turkey. What may unite Pomaks from the above mentioned countries is, on the one hand, their shared Muslim religion,<sup>4</sup> and on the other hand, their language, Pomak. Most importantly, contacts between Pomaks from all three countries, Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey, appear to be frequent although we lack precise studies on this topic.

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<sup>4</sup> We note the presence of other Slavic-speaking Muslims in the Balkans, i.e., in Albania, in the Republic of Macedonia and in Kosovo. However, the language varieties of these populations do not share a number of features with the Pomak varieties. Moreover, these groups use different language names and ethnic group names, e.g., Torbesh and Gorani. This topic deserves further investigation since during some interviews it appears that Pomaks from Greece are open to considering these varieties as “Pomak” varieties.

The paper is structured as follows: in section 2, taking a big-data approach, we discuss the information that can be gathered through national censuses with respect to Pomaks. In section 3 we present the Pomak linguistic background. In section 4, we discuss language endangerment, specifically language shift in Greece and Turkey and dialect levelling in Bulgaria. In 5, we discuss the sociopolitical context blocking language policies in favor of Pomak and show how the lack of political action is shaping the language practices of the Pomaks. Last, in section 6, we address the relevance of creating a literary Pomak language by discussing existing language planning models in Europe.

## **2. Pomaks in Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece: a big data approach**

In this section we present some background information on Pomaks based on macro-linguistic data for Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece. However, the information gathered with a big-data approach is problematic for two main reasons. Questions with respect to identity or first language are either not included in the censuses, e.g., Greece and Turkey, or are optional, e.g., Bulgaria. Moreover, responses to questions in official censuses about ethnic groups and language use are notoriously complex and thus the results should always be viewed with some distance. For example, sometimes the language spoken at home is not considered a language worth mentioning in a census especially when it does not have a literary tradition and an official status. Also, when censuses suggest language names, they may use exonyms, i.e., language names employed by outsiders, that members of the speech community do not identify with. In section 2.1. we present and discuss the data for Bulgaria, in section 2.2. for Turkey, and in section 2.3. for Greece.

### **2.1. Bulgaria**

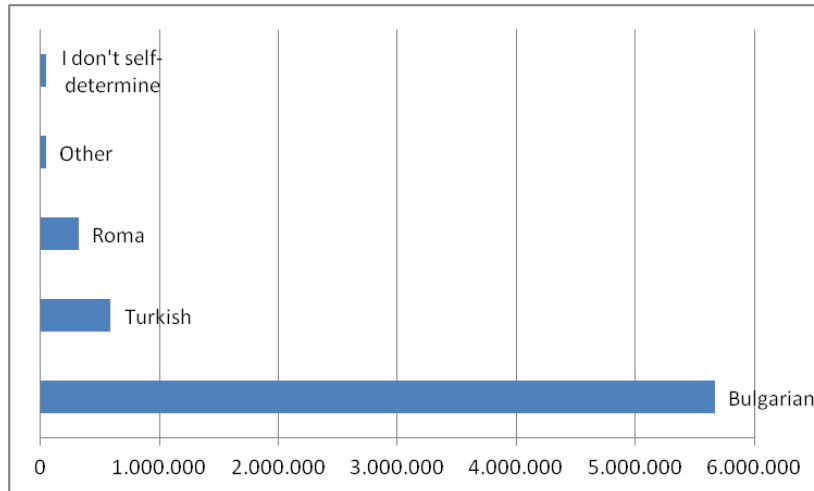
In the Bulgarian 2011 census, questions about ethnicity, mother tongue, and religion were optional.<sup>5</sup> We note that the least frequently answered question is the one related to religion (22% non-response), followed by 10% non-response for mother tongue, and 9% for ethnicity.

The graph in Figure 1, shows the ethnic composition of the population in Bulgaria in the 2011 census based on the voluntary responses about ethnic affiliation (source *National Statistics Institute*). We observe that 84.8% of the respondents self-ascribe to the Bulgarian ethnic group, 8.8% to the Turkish

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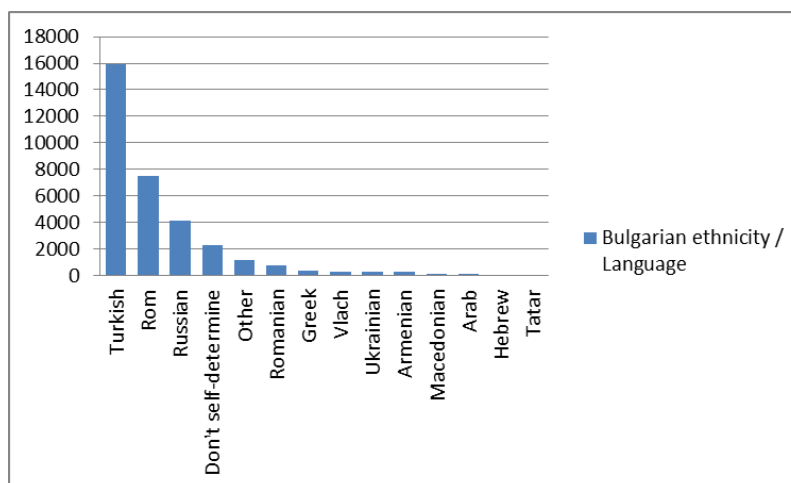
<sup>5</sup> We note that the right to belong to a minority or the right not to answer questions about ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, Art. 6 par. 2.

ethnic group, 4.9% to the Romani ethnic group, and 0.8% responded that they do not have any ethnic self-determination.



**Figure 1. Major ethnic composition in Bulgaria (2011) (our graphic processing of data from NSI)**

99.4% of the respondents who declared Bulgarian ethnicity also indicated that Bulgarian was their mother tongue. The graph in Figure 2 shows the languages, other than Bulgarian, associated with the Bulgarian ethnicity, i.e., 0.28% of these respondents indicated Turkish as their first language, followed by 0.13% with Romani first language.

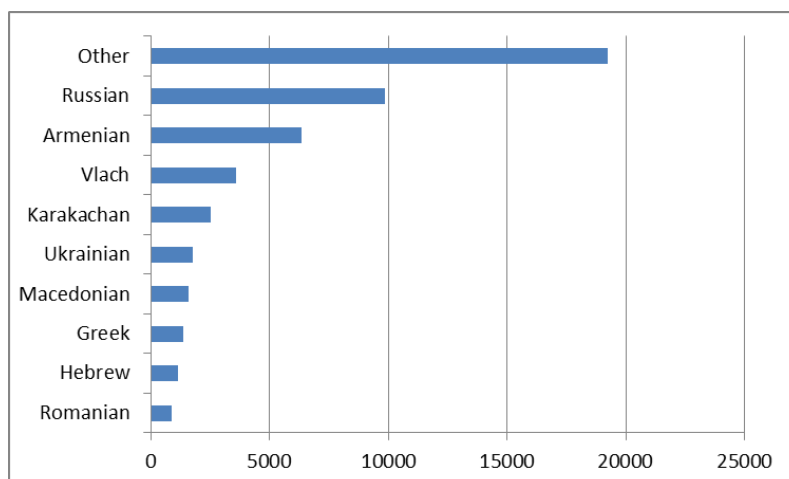


**Figure 2. Relationship Bulgarian ethnicity / Language (our graphic processing of data from NSI)**

Figure 3 graphs the responses with respect to self-declared minorities. The traditional ethnic minorities in Bulgaria, i.e., formed before 1878,<sup>6</sup> are the Russian, Armenian, Karakachan, Vlach, Greek, Hebrew, Tatar, Gagauz, Serbian, Cherkes, and Albanian minorities. Typically, members of these minorities are bilingual, with the language of their ethnic group and Bulgarian.<sup>7</sup> We note that, similar to the 2001 official census, Pomak is not mentioned in the 2011 census. However, this result could be shaded by the fact that 19,260 respondents opted for “other” and 53,107 for “do not self-determine”. We may therefore consider that these two groups of respondents are likely to include members of the Pomak population along with other minority groups.

<sup>6</sup> Treaty of San Stefano, 3 March 1878, signed between Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>7</sup> Source: NSI, NCCEDI - *National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues*. Year: 2011. <http://www.nccedi.government.bg>



**Figure 3. Self-declared minority groups in Bulgaria (our graphic processing of data from NSI)**

In conclusion, there are no official statistics on the number of Pomaks in Bulgaria. A tentative estimation can be done if we consider the religious affiliation in combination with the areas of historical presence of the Pomaks in Bulgaria: of the 577,139 respondents who declared being Muslim, 29,001 of them live in the region of Smolyan (Rhodope), 82,227 in the region of Kărdžali, and 23,314 in the region of Haskovo. According to this estimate, the number of Pomaks in Bulgaria would be roughly 100,000.

## 2.2. Turkey

In Turkey, no questions about ethnicity, religion and language were covered by the last census. However, based on a study conducted by Turkish Universities, the number of Pomaks in Turkey is estimated between 300,000 to 600,000,<sup>8</sup> a figure that seems particularly high when contrasted with older sources.

Indeed, according to the information in the 1965 census, which was the last census in Turkey to take into consideration linguistic minorities (METZ 1995), 23,138 respondents declared having Pomak as their mother tongue, 2,776 declared Pomak as their unique spoken language, while 34,234 declared Pomak as their second best spoken language. The majority of those respondents lived in Edirne, Kırklareli, and Çanakkale. Due to the use of the

<sup>8</sup> Numbers cited by the journal *Milliyet* June 6, 2008. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/turkiye-deki-kurtlerin-sayisi-yasam/magazindetay/06.06.2008/873452/default.htm>

language name “Bulgarian”, the group of the respondents probably corresponds to Christian Bulgarians, even though it cannot be excluded that part of the respondents were Pomaks who opted for the official language name “Bulgarian”. In general, however, one must note that the census was conducted at a moment when responses with respect to minorities were highly problematic and as a consequence the real numbers were most probably much higher.

At the end of the 1980s, the number of Pomaks in Turkey increased when more than 320,000 Bulgarian Turks and other Muslim Bulgarians (including Pomaks) moved to Turkey following repressive measures of forced assimilation in Bulgaria. However, it is also noted that in the following years some 125,000 of them, both Bulgarian Turks and Muslim Bulgarians, voluntarily returned to Bulgaria (METZ 1995). From these numbers it is not easy to draw any conclusions about the presence of Pomaks in Turkey following the migration of the 1980s, but it is safe to say that the links with Turkey were strengthened.

Finally, Pomaks from both Greece and Bulgaria have settled in Turkey since the 1990s, following education or migration for professional reasons.

To conclude, given the numbers in the 1965 census and what we know about the migration in the years 1980 and 1990, the numbers cited in *Milliyet* in 2008 remain particularly high. If these numbers were to be precise, this would mean that the majority of Pomaks is nowadays settled in Turkey.

### 2.3. Greece

In Greece, the 2011 national census did not include any questions about ethnicity, religion or mother tongue that could be relevant for the present paper.<sup>9</sup> The number of Pomaks in Greece is estimated to be approximately 36,000 according to the numbers cited in KOSTOPOULOS (2009, 290–291). However, it is very difficult to evaluate the presence of Pomaks in Greece. One of the criteria could be the use of the Pomak language, but a strong language shift to Turkish has taken place during the twentieth century considerably diminishing the number of Pomak speakers. Moreover, the language shift was accompanied by a shift in identity in a way that individuals of Pomak ancestry frequently refer to themselves nowadays as Turks. Even though a possible mention of the Pomak background may surface in ethnographic interviews, as the first author’s research shows, it would most likely be excluded from an official census. Lastly, urbanization and marriages between members of various ethnic groups have also considerably modified the identities and it is more appropriate to describe Greek Thrace Pomaks in terms of complex identities.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/PAGE-census2011>

### 3. *Linguistic background on Pomak*

#### 3.1. *Language name*

The language name Pomak refers to the Balkan Slavic linguistic varieties traditionally spoken by Muslim communities which are settled in Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey. The most common alternate names are Bulgarian, that of the most closely-related standard language (c.f. *Ethnologue*),<sup>10</sup> or Rhodopean, a language name which is based on the name of the Rhodope Mountains where Pomaks have traditionally lived. In Bulgaria, preference for one of these terms is variable. For example, those settled in the Bulgarian Rhodope mountains refer to their language as *na rodopski* ‘in Rhodopean’, while the denomination *na pomashki* ‘in Pomak’ is preferred by those living in areas where the presence of ethnic Turkish groups is stronger, e.g., the villages close to the region of Haskovo and Kărdžali such as Mandra, Krivo Pole, Koren, and Malevo. In Greece, Pomak, *pomatsko*, is the most common language name.

#### 3.2. *Pomak in a dialectological and typological perspective*

Pomak belongs to the South Slavic language branch and more specifically its Eastern group, together with Bulgarian and Macedonian. Bulgarian dialectologists classify Pomak as a Rhodope dialect of Bulgarian, generally qualified as “archaic”; see among others MILETIČ 1912, MIRČEV et al. 1962–1981, KANEVSKA-NIKOLOVA 2006. In KANEVSKA-NIKOLOVA (2012b), there is an overview of the conservative features that characterize the Rhodope dialects which bear witness to an intermediate state of transition from Old Bulgarian/Slavic to the contemporary Bulgarian language.

At the phonetic level, the most important features are the widespread presence of the vowel [ɔ] (Bulgarian transcription ô) in place of the Old Church Slavonic *yers* and nasal vowels [ĕ] and [ǫ] (*ǎ/ǖ* in Standard Bulgarian) which are still attested in the village Tihomir (see KABASANOV 1963); the open front vowel [æ] (Bulgarian transcription ê) and the use of the Old Church Slavonic vowel [y] (*ь*) after stops, as attested in the village Tihomir; the palatalization of the consonants before the front vowels *e* and *i*, e.g., *dĕ'sa-ta* ‘the children’, *kamen'ie* ‘stones’. Another shared phonetic trait of the Rhodope varieties are the reduction *o* > *a*, *o* > *u*, and *e* > *i*, which are also found in other Bulgarian dialects.

The use of a number of lexical items derived from Common Slavic, and present in Old Church Slavonic, is also considered a conservative feature characteristic of the Rhodope varieties.

At the grammatical level, the Rhodope varieties can be thought of as “conservative” in that they have kept grammatical case, unlike the most

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ethnologue.com/>



closely-related Bulgarian and Macedonian. This has been described for Pomak spoken in Greece where there is a nominative, genitive–dative (based on the dative forms), accusative (old genitive–accusative), and vocative case (ADAMOU 2009). In Pomak spoken in Bulgaria, however, case is no longer in use nowadays following the trend of reverting to an analytic system observed in Bulgarian and Macedonian. In the end of the nineteenth century, POPKONSTANTINOV (1889) noted the presence of case in the Bulgarian Rhodope region, illustrated in (1) for the accusative and combining with the three definite articles (see below for more details on the definite articles).

1. *'starea-tu-g*  
 old-DEF.A-ACC  
*'starea-su-g*  
 old-DEF.S-ACC  
*'starea-nu-g*  
 old-DEF.D-ACC  
 (POPKONSTANTINOV 1889, 137, note 14; our glosses)

The use of the dative case is also described in STOJKOV (1962), as illustrated in (2).

2. *'sin-u*            *čeleku-tu-mu*  
 son-DAT            person-DEF.A-DAT  
*'brat-u*            *čeleku-su-mu*  
 brother-DAT       person-DEF.S-DAT  
*I'van-u*            *čeleku-nu-mu*  
 Ivan-DAT           person-DEF.D-DAT  
 (STOJKOV 1962, 131–132; our glosses)

Based on features such as grammatical case, it is widely accepted that the Pomak varieties of Greece are even more conservative than the Rhodope varieties spoken in Bulgaria which appear to have been strongly influenced by the Bulgarian literary language (KANEVSKA-NIKOLOVA 2012a, 52).

Against the widespread approach among Bulgarian scholars, however, ADAMOU (2011) has stressed that Pomak should not be viewed merely as a conservative Slavic variety since it also shows a number of innovative features. For example, it is noted that Pomak in Greece codes animacy in case, a “conservative” feature characterizing Old Church Slavonic (MEILLET 1897) as well as several modern Slavic languages (see ADAMOU 2009 referring to this phenomenon as “differential object marking”). But, unlike the other Slavic languages, Pomak has innovated and extended this marking to feminine proper nouns. See example (3a), where the accusative case is used for the feminine proper noun ‘Meriem’ and compare with the

nominative form. The accusative case observed in this example would not have been used for a non-human object, as can be seen in (3b).

- 3a. *huse'in*                      *i'ftja*                      *meri'em-a*  
 NP.M.NOM                      want.AOR.3SG                      NP.F-ACC  
*a'la*    *meri'em*                      *gu*    *ni*                      *i'ftja*  
 but    NP.F.NOM                      3SG.ACC NEG                      want.AOR.3SG  
 'Hussein liked Meriem, but Meriem didn't like him'.  
 (ADAMOU 2009, 389)

- 3b. *kladi*                      *na'xtar-et*    *na*    *vra'ta-ta*  
 put.IMP.2SG    key-DEF.A    at    door-DEF.A  
 'Put the key on the door!'

Another feature that characterizes Pomak is the use of three definite articles with a spatial-pragmatic reference, similar to Macedonian. The three Pomak articles allow a distinction between a referent which is close to the speaker's sphere, marked by *-s-* and illustrated in (4a), close to the addressee's sphere, marked by *-t-* as in (4b), and away from both, marked by *-n-* as can be seen in (4c).

- [context: table close to the speaker]  
 4a. *jela*                      *nah matsa-sa*  
 come.IMP.2SG    to    table-DEF.S  
 'Come to the table!' (ADAMOU 2011, 875)

- [context: table close to the interlocutor]  
 4b. *na*                      *matsa-ta*  
 at                      table-DEF.A  
 'On the table!' (ADAMOU 2011, 875)

- [context: table away from both interlocutors]  
 4c. *pri*                      *matsa-na*  
 next                      table-DEF.D  
 'Next to the table!' (ADAMOU 2011, 875)

Although the three-way article distinction in Pomak is considered a conservative feature among most Bulgarian dialectologists, it is convincingly described as an innovation in MLADENOVA (2007). More significantly, unlike Macedonian, the Pomak articles partake in an innovative range of temporal-modal uses that constitute a rare typological feature since grammatical tense is generally linked to verbs and not nouns (ADAMOU 2011). In the temporal set of uses, the *-t-* article, which is used for referents close to the addressee in

“here and now” situations, is used for the past, as shown in (5a), and the distal article *-n-* is used for the future, as shown in (5b).

5a. *na sfadba-ta beh sas tferven-et fustan*  
at marriage-DEF.PAST was.1SG with red-DEF.PAST dress  
‘At the marriage, I was wearing the red dress.’ (ADAMOU 2011, 877)

5b. *na sfadba-na fe nadena-m tferven-en fustan*  
at marriage-DEF. FUT wear-1SG red-DEF.FUT dress  
‘At the marriage, I will wear the red dress.’ (ADAMOU 2011, 877)

Research in the Rhodope dialects spoken in Bulgaria by both Christians and Muslims has also pointed to similar uses (KABASANOV 1964, KANEVSKA-NIKOLOVA 2012a, FANCIULLO 2014, 2015). Temporal markedness in the noun phrase appears to be mandatory in the contexts in which the temporal value is primary and contributes to the overall meaning of the phrase. This is particularly apparent when modal and evidential values are triggered. The same can be observed with the temporally marked demonstratives and subordinators.

It should be noted, however, that Pomak spoken in Greece is characterized by a significant amount of variation as frequently observed for non-standardized varieties (ADAMOU 2011). For example, in some Pomak villages the three articles are used while in others the *-t* article is the only one maintained. The same can be observed in the Pomak varieties spoken in Bulgaria.

### ***3.3. Pomak in relation to the Rhodope varieties of the Christian communities***

In Bulgaria, Pomak is a term that applies to the Slavic varieties spoken by the Muslim populations, but there are no significant linguistic differences between the Pomak varieties and the most closely-related Rhodope varieties spoken by Christians.

According to MILETIČ (1912), there are no substantial differences between the dialects of the Muslim Slavic speakers (Pomaks) and the Christians who live in the Rhodope Mountains in Bulgaria. The main features which are perceived as typical of the speech of Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) are the *akane* in unaccented syllables by which an [o] in Standard Bulgarian is realized as [a] in the Rhodope dialects, e.g., *go 'ljam* vs. *ga 'ljam* ‘big’, *mo 'gila* vs. *ma 'gila* ‘hill’, *ot 'nese* vs. *ad 'nese* ‘took away’, and the full vocalization (pleophony), e.g., *gla 'va* vs. *gala 'va* ‘head’ (VRANČEV 1948, 25).

Differences between the Rhodope dialects spoken by Muslims and Christians are considered to be minimal and yet, in VRANČEV (1948), the

dialect of Bulgarian Muslims living in the Rhodope Mountains is considered to be closer to Old Slavonic and less exposed to external influences. It is thus qualified as “pure”, “archaic”, and “nicer” than the varieties spoken by Bulgarian Christians, and is described as “softer and more melodious” (VRANČEV 1948, 25–26), probably due to the process of palatalization of the consonants, as described in the previous section.

According to STOJKOV (1962), differences are limited: in the village Arda, e.g., Rhodope Christians *atse* vs. Rhodope Muslims *jejtse* ‘egg’; *dvar* vs. *duvar* ‘wall’; *mutek* vs. *mitek* ‘small’; *vrut* vs. *vrit* ‘all’ (STOJKOV 1962: 128); in several villages, i.e., Borikovo, Dolen, Smilen, Kiseličevo, Mogilica, use of the vowel [y] (Cyrillic *ѱ*), e.g., *vykam* ‘call’, *žyto* ‘wheat’, *myška* ‘mouse’, *syrene* ‘cheese’, and *kravy* ‘cows’ (STOJKOV 1962, 130). The use of [y] is also found in the Pomak varieties of Greece as well as in a number of other Balkan Slavic varieties, i.e., it is mentioned as a distinctive trait of Tihomir in Bulgaria, similar to the Pavlikians’ dialect (KANEVSKA-NIKOLOVA 2012a following MILETIČ 1912, 13–16) and the dialects of the villages of Nikopoli (bg. Zarovo) and Ossa (bg. Visoka) in Greece (KANEVSKA-NIKOLOVA 2012a, note 1 following IVANOV 1922, 93–94).

The use of Turkish borrowings is another feature that is often referred to in order to differentiate the speech of Muslim and Christian Slavic speakers in the Rhodopes (VRANČEV 1948, 25). STOJKOV (1962, 128) mentions that Bulgarian Pomaks have Turkish names and use Turkish greetings and numerals. ADAMOU (2010) similarly notes for Pomak spoken in Greece the existence of specific religious-cultural expressions borrowed from Turkish and sometimes from Arabic via Turkish, e.g., greetings such as *hof geldin* ‘welcome’; *i gjedzeler* ‘good night’; *salam alekum* (Arabic); *meraba* ‘hallo’ (Turkish < Arabic); thanking expressions such as *allah kabulele* (Arabic); *bereket vārsin*; *allah kabul etsin*; close kinship terms such as *bubajko* ‘dad’ (reg. *buba*); *anne* ‘mom’; *abla* ‘elder sister’; and numerals above 5.

#### **3.4. Mutual intelligibility between speakers of Bulgarian and Pomak**

In order to establish the proximity or the distance between two languages, intelligibility studies are widely used in linguistics (see recently the special issue of *Linguistics* on this topic, edited by SCHÜPPERT, HILTON AND GOOSKENS 2015). Such systematic studies are still needed in order to establish the degree of intelligibility between speakers of Bulgarian and Pomak. These studies must take into consideration the fact that there is often an asymmetrical inter-comprehension between speakers of a standard language and speakers of dialects, related to exposure and possibly also language attitudes.

In the absence of intelligibility studies for Pomak and Bulgarian and in order to illustrate both language attitudes with respect to Pomak and some preliminary remarks on the intelligibility of Pomak among Bulgarian and

Macedonian speakers, we present in (6) an excerpt from an informal discussion on Facebook among academics. The participants to this discussion are either native speakers of Bulgarian or academics who have an excellent knowledge of Bulgarian and Macedonian. The discussion concerns the comprehension of an online broadcast<sup>11</sup> in Pomak as spoken in Greece.

- 6.
- a. Does anyone understand anything in this video? It seems to me that if one doesn't speak fluently Greek it is impossible to understand anything from the 'Pomack' language.
  - b. Surprising!
  - c. Yes, the most distant Macedonian dialect is fifty times more understandable than this.
  - d. Yes, indeed [...] it's disturbing for someone who speaks Bulgarian [...] we understand some words but...
  - e. Well, the accent is totally Greek. There are also many Greek and Turkish words (haber...) [...]
  - f. In my opinion, it's Greek with ingredients of a 'dialect' conceived and authorized by some specialist of the [Greek] Ministry of Interior. It's the logical result of the attempt to create a modern language, so to 'Grecize' as an alternative to 'Slavicize' which would be equivalent to 'Bulgarize' and therefore not an option.  
(some sentences are translated from French)

In this informal conversation, it appears that the content of the Pomak broadcast is not understood by speakers of Bulgarian and Macedonian who are not familiar with the Rhodope or Pomak dialects. Moreover, unpublished research from the first author of this article confirms the lack of inter-comprehension between speakers of Bulgarian and speakers of Pomak from Greece, through recordings and in face-to-face conversations.

The situation is probably not so different for Bulgarian speakers with respect to the Rhodope dialects from Bulgaria. As discussed in the preceding sections, the Pomak varieties have phonetic, morphological, and lexical characteristics that make them difficult to understand for native speakers of Bulgarian. For example, we report below a discussion from a blog with respect to a previous post of an audio recording in the Rhodope dialect. The

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<sup>11</sup> We note that despite its success among the local Pomak-speaking population, this broadcast is no longer provided and has been replaced by a broadcast in Turkish, the official minority language which is more widely spoken in the area and which is generally supported by substantial funding.

comments by the Bulgarian-speaking users, apparently not inhabitants of the Rhodope region, indicate their difficulty in understanding the recording:

7.
  - a. Only at the end, I just do not understand it after “run run, doctor, then a cow ...”
  - b. ...it was not easy
  - c. I did not understand a thing :(
  - d. It’s true, the “original” speech of this aunt is practically not understandable!
  - e. I barely understood what the grandmother is talking about!  
(our translation from Bulgarian)

In contrast, all Pomak speakers living in Bulgaria have a good knowledge of Bulgarian, through education, everyday contact, and media. In Greece and Turkey, however, even though contact with speakers of Bulgarian has increased in the past decades, the knowledge of Bulgarian is by no means widespread. It would therefore be interesting to conduct an inter-intelligibility study in both countries.

#### ***4. Dialect levelling, language contact, and language shift***

Let us now turn to language practices in the three countries and examine more specifically the challenges for the transmission of Pomak in each case. In 4.1. we discuss the situation in Bulgaria, in 4.2. in Greece, and in 4.3. in Turkey.

##### ***4.1. Bulgaria***

In Bulgaria, due to the proximity of Pomak with Bulgarian and a situation of diglossia, we observe clear effects of so-called “dialect levelling” (see MILROY AND MILROY 1985, KERSWILL 2003). For example, the analysis of a 30-hour corpus of interviews among the speakers of the Rhodope dialects from Bulgaria shows the predominance of the *-t* deictic forms (which partake among others in the formation of definite articles), especially among the youngest speakers, and the loss of the two other deictics, *-s* and *-n* (FANCIULLO 2015). A possible interpretation of this finding is that the frequent use of the *-t* form is due to influence from Standard Bulgarian which has a single deictic *-t* for determination. The use of this Standard Bulgarian features as observed in the recordings may also be influenced by the fact that these conversations took place with outside group members who do not have the local Pomak variety as their first language. Finally, we note that the corpus consists of conversations on topics related to the past, i.e., traditions,

customs, religious festivals, and may have thus resulted in the greater use of deictic *-t* associated with the past temporal values.

It is also generally noted that, in Bulgaria as in other European countries, dialects are not transmitted to the younger generations. This is due to a complex set of sociolinguistic factors but we note that negative language attitudes towards Pomak are also at play. As reported for the Pomaks who live in the Chech region (westernmost Rhodope Mountains, Blagoevgrad Province, in South-eastern Pirin Macedonia), Pomak is nowadays viewed as: “corrupted Bulgarian (a term for dialects used in Bulgarian linguistics in the past). In other words, they [Pomaks] assume that there might be a relation to the Bulgarian language, tending to have in mind the standard norm” (SREBRANOV 2006, 139).

Although, as discussed in the sections that follow, the influence of Turkish is crucial for Pomak spoken in Greece and Turkey, Turkish influence does not seem to be important in Bulgaria. Indeed, during the twentieth century, knowledge of Turkish among the Pomaks in Bulgaria is considered peripheral (see VRANČEV 1948, 47), but this is also argued to be the case for Pomaks in Greece (ADAMOU 2010). However, unlike the strong shift to Turkish reported for Pomak speakers of Greece in the second half of the twentieth century (ADAMOU 2010), no strong shift to Turkish is noted in Bulgaria although several families, especially those who have kinship relations in Turkey, encourage university education in Turkey. This may be due to a feeling of greater cultural proximity and religious identity with Turkey, and is encouraged through specific scholarships for students of Turkish origin; see for example the recent *Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities* program.<sup>12</sup>

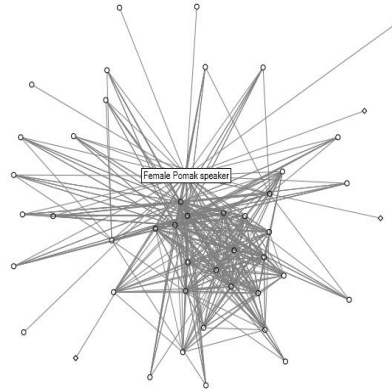
#### 4.2. Greece

In Greece, Pomaks are at best trilingual, speaking Pomak together with Turkish and Greek. However, there is a very strong tendency for Pomaks to shift to Turkish and this shift has already been completed for several families and localities of Greek Thrace (ADAMOU 2010). It is therefore likely that the generation which is now in their 20s and has learnt Pomak will not transmit the language to the generations to come. Education plays a role for this choice as younger speakers, including young women, are nowadays more educated than their parents and grand-parents through schooling in Turkish and Greek. Bilingual Greek-Turkish education is provided to Muslim communities of Greek Thrace in accordance to the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Young Pomak speakers are also more exposed to Turkish and Greek as their social networks have been radically changed (ADAMOU 2012). Compare the social network graphed in Figure 4a for a female Pomak speaker,

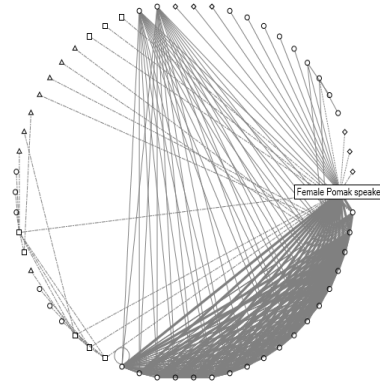
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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ytb.gov.tr/>

reconstructed for the middle of the twentieth century, and the present day social network graphed in Figure 4b. It appears clearly that the network is dense and multiplex in both cases, but that in the contemporary setting contacts with community outsiders have increased.



**Figure 4a. Social network for a female Pomak speaker reconstructed for the mid-twentieth century (family in circles and close friends in triangles)**



**Figure 4b. Contemporary social network for a female Pomak speaker (coworkers in rectangles, family in circles, and close friends in triangles)**

#### **4.3. Turkey**

Pomaks in Turkey appear to be bilingual in Pomak and Turkish but language shift to Turkish may be inferred from a study that mentions the presence of 600,000 Pomaks most of whom have been “Turkified”.<sup>13</sup> Based on a qualitative study, KAHL (2007) also reports language shift to Turkish among Pomaks of Turkey. However, we lack studies and data about language practices in families of Pomak background settled in Turkey.

#### **5. Why Pomak will not be the next Slavic literary language?**

In this section we now turn to discuss the chances for the creation of a Pomak literary language.

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<sup>13</sup> Study reported in the journal *Milliyet* June 6, 2008, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/turkiye-deki-kurtlerin-sayisi-yasam/magazinetay/06.06.2008/873452/default.htm>



### 5.1. Pomak in the minority rights movements agenda

The creation of a literary language is typically a top-to-bottom process similar to other instances of language regulation such as those related to language Academies around the world. It is therefore expected that a small number of people would elaborate a literary language, through literary creation and standardization. This is generally achieved by combining a number of dialectal features with lexical innovation, in order to respond to the expansion of language domains and replace borrowing from the dominant language. The codification of a language requires the identification of a unified spelling and in general the transition from an oral tradition to a written one with extension of language domains, a process that is intrinsically linked to issues of prestige and social status; see among others HAUGEN (1966), MILROY AND MILROY (1985), DEUMERT (2004), GORTER, VAN MENSEL AND MARTEN (2012).

For this process to be successful, a favorable political context is required, and as experience shows it is best supported by the existence of an autonomous state; see the examples of Macedonian, Croatian, or more recently — in a clear top-to-bottom approach — Montenegrin. However, as discussed in this section, there is no active Pomak political movement in either Bulgaria, Greece or Turkey, and even less so a movement for the promotion of the Pomak language.

In Bulgaria there are some attempts of politicization of the Pomak population around a distinct identity, e.g., the POMAK party (Patriotic Alliance for Diversity, Authenticity and Culture, in Bulgarian *Patriotično Obedinenie za Mnogoobrazie, Avtentičnost i Kultura*). The POMAK party, however, has made no ethnic or religious claims. Lack of political organization promoting a Pomak minority in Bulgaria may be due to the relatively low discrimination for Muslims in general. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) report, there appears to be no significant discrimination in the field for Bulgarians of Turkish background and we expect this finding to also apply to Pomaks:

In contrast with the other Turkish groups surveyed, respondents in Bulgaria identified all other grounds of discrimination as more widespread than discrimination on the basis of religion or belief. Moreover, in Bulgaria many respondents identified various grounds of discrimination as ‘non-existent’ – more than in other countries; for example, two respondents in five (40%) said that discrimination on ethnic grounds was non-existent, and three in five (60%) thought the same about discrimination on religious grounds (FRA report 2009: 199).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <http://fra.europa.eu/en>

In contrast, reports on minority rights in Bulgaria put forward claims for ethnic recognition for two Slavic-speaking minorities, Pomaks, and Macedonians:

66. Article 54 of the Bulgarian Constitution states that “everyone shall have the right to avail himself of the national and universal human cultural values and to develop his own culture in accordance with his ethnic self-identification, which shall be recognized and guaranteed by the law.” However, the Government denies the existence of an ethnic Macedonian minority, and does not recognize the Pomaks (considered as Bulgarian-speaking Muslims by the Government) as a distinct minority – claiming that both groups are in fact ethnic Bulgarians. Representatives of those who self-identify as ethnic Macedonians and as Pomaks claim that their minority rights are consequently violated.

[...]

93. In accordance with its Constitutional provisions to respect the right to ethnic self-identification, the Government should ensure and protect this right, as well as the freedom of expression and freedom of association of members of the Macedonian and Pomak minorities. (Excerpt from the report of the independent expert on minority issues, United Nations General Assembly, Jan 2012).<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, in these reports, no recommendation is made for the use of the Pomak language in education as opposed to recommendations for Macedonian, Romani, and Turkish:

97. The Government’s position not to allow the use of mother tongue languages as the language of instruction in schools, particularly in regions where minorities are a majority or constitute a large percentage of the population, is a concern for minorities, including the Roma, Turkish Muslims and Macedonians. Bilingual education commencing in the early years of schooling would enable children to become proficient in their mother tongue as well as in Bulgarian. Furthermore, it would enable them to maintain their ethnic and linguistic identity and help minority pupils to achieve positive educational outcomes. The Government is urged to consider introducing bilingual education and to ratify the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. (Excerpt from the report of the

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.e-f-a.org/home/>

independent expert on minority issues, United Nations General Assembly, Jan 2012).<sup>16</sup>

The distinct treatment of Pomak is clearly *not* due to linguistic reasons, for example a greater linguistic distance between Macedonian and Bulgarian than between Pomak and Bulgarian. Rather, this difference stems from the fact that Macedonian is promoted as a distinct language at least since roughly the middle of the twentieth century and increasingly so since the independence of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1991–1993).

Similarly, in Turkey, there is no strong movement for the recognition of Pomaks as an ethnic or linguistic minority. A rather symbolic mention of Pomaks as a distinct ethnic group is presented in the excerpt below from a well-cited interview of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan:

Republic of Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a speech to the citizens in his hometown Rize on November 7. In this public speech, he mentioned about the Pomaks that they are equal ethnics as other ethnicity living in Turkey. This speech means that Prime Minister accepted the existence of Pomaks living in Turkey.

“No one is superior to anyone!”

Erdogan also stated that Turkish, Kurdish, Laz, Circassian, Abaza, Pomaks Manav, Georgian are not superior to each other.

“Everyone is valuable for us. No one is superior to anyone!”, he said. (2011, <http://www.habera.com/Erdogan-bu-kez-siveli-seslendi-haberi-119510.html>)

This statement follows the Justice and Development (AK) party's strategy to promote political dialogue and actions in favor of minorities in Turkey, most notably among the Kurds and Roma (KAVAL 2014, CHAMBRIAL AND MANAC'H 2015). The relative promotion of minorities in Turkey needs to be put in perspective within the more general frame of promotion of the religious foundations of Turkey which sets the frame for the recognition of linguistic minorities (ÖZKAN 2014). However, the situation is quickly changing since the elections in summer 2015 which have shaken AKP's supremacy.

In Greece, Pomaks are part of the so-called Muslim or Turkish minority and partake in a complex sociopolitical setting composed of conflicting interests from the two dominant ethnic groups and respective states in the area, Greece and Turkey; see for more details TSIBIRIDOU (2000), DEMETRIOU (2004), PAPANIKOLAOU (2008), and KOSTOPOULOS (2009).

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.e-f-a.org/home/>

Local religious authorities are funded by Greece, Turkey and increasingly from other Islamic countries further complicating the situation.

In the Greek context, the Pomak language could become a feature of the Pomak identity as it cannot easily merge with the Bulgarian identity which is strongly characterized by the Orthodox religion and the neighboring Bulgarian state. However, no official actions from the Greek state are taken in favor of Pomak, and they are likely not to be taken by the newly elected left-wing SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) government in 2015. This is expected since the affair concerning Sabiha Suleiman's candidacy with SYRIZA for the 2014 European parliamentary elections. At the time, the party's candidate in Thrace, Dimitris Christopoulos, strongly opposed Suleiman's candidacy fearing the candidate's "Greek nationalist speech" and stating that the Muslim Minority in Thrace is "a Turkish unified thing" that should not be challenged; see among others *Al Jazeera's* article on the topic.<sup>17</sup>

In the absence of left-wing support, it is interesting to note that the promotion of Pomak rights in Greece is part of the agenda of the extreme-right wing parties. For example, in 2007, Georgios Karatzaferis, who was at the time a member of the Independence/democracy group in the European Parliament and the president of the extreme-right wing party LAOS (Popular Orthodox Party), addressed the European Parliament to support the creation of a chair of Pomak language and culture at the Democritus University of Greek Thrace:

For decades, the Greek state has pointedly and defiantly ignored the cultural identity of the Pomaks of Greek Thrace, whom it is trying to 'Turkicise' by refusing to teach them their own language and forcing them to learn Turkish.

The Pomaks are using every means to protest against this strategy and are calling for an immediate end to the fascist practice of enforced 'Turkicisation'. Recently, a well-known Greek businessman, Mr Prodromos Emfietzoglou, proposed that a 'Chair for Pomak Language and Culture' should be set up at the Democritus University of Thrace in order to record the language, history, customs and traditions of the Pomaks.

Can the EU take some kind of initiative to subsidise the establishment of such a chair and can its creation, the aim of which is to preserve a priceless example of Balkans culture and prevent the enforced 'Turkicisation' of the Pomaks, be placed under the aegis of the EU?

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/05/greek-roma-muslim-an-ill-fated-f-20145572540804183.html>

The Commission's negative reply is cited below:

The Commission attaches great importance to the protection of minorities, to multiculturalism and multilingualism — values which are among the EU core principles.

Article 151 (1) of the Treaty states that 'the Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member states, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore'. The respect for the cultural, religious and linguistic diversity in Member states was reaffirmed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 22).

In its communication 'a new framework strategy for multilingualism', adopted in 2005, the Commission calls upon Member states to establish national plans to promote multilingualism, also taking into account regional and minority languages.

However, the Commission would also like to draw the Honourable Member's attention to Articles 149 and 150 of the Treaty clearly giving the Member states full responsibility for the organisation of their education and vocational training systems and the content of teaching. The EU's role in this field is not to replace their actions, but to support and supplement them.

With respect to the proposal to create a Chair of Pomak language and culture at the Democritus University of Thrace, the Commission has to emphasise that it has neither a legal basis, nor a budget authorisation to support such an action. (source: European Parliament website <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>)

To conclude, in this complex political context, it appears that no official promotion of Pomak in Greece is to be expected in the near or more distant future.

## ***5.2. Pomak in the press and in informally-written contexts***

If the creation of a literary language is a top-down process, is there a bottom-up future for the promotion of Pomak? For example, studies of informally-written Romani on the Internet and social media show that speakers use any script available to them depending on the country of origin (LEGGIO 2013).

In Bulgaria, we note the existence of websites and pages on Facebook, where users discuss their dialect, customs, and folklore. In general, users of these forums use the Cyrillic script when writing in dialect, but this is to be expected given that this is the script of the Bulgarian educational system.

These forums involve both Christians and Muslims and the confessional criterion is not associated with a linguistic distinction. Generally they use the adjective *rodopski* 'Rhodope' as a grouper for linguistic, geographic, and cultural identity. An analysis of some examples illustrates the use of the local varieties. For example, in (8a), we note the use of the three-way determiners, typical of the Rhodope varieties, and in particular the use of the deictic *-s* to indicate the possessive meaning for the inalienable parts of the body (*dušo-sa* 'my soul', *sartse-so* 'my heart') and geographical belonging (*naš-sa planino* 'our mountain'). With regard to phonetics, we note the *akane* form with the use of [a] in a stressed syllable, i.e., *'balno* vs. *'bolno* in Standard Bulgarian. In (8b), we note the use of the temporal subordinator *aga* which is a feature of the Pomak varieties, and the *-s* deictic associated to a situation which is simultaneous with the utterance situation, i.e., *divi-se jagodi* 'wild strawberries'. Last, in (8c), in an excerpt from a tale, we note the use of the evidential forms such as *rodila* 'gave birth', *račila* 'wanted', formed with the past participle in *-l*, and absence of the auxiliary.

8a. *Йетце хубаво си го написал. Хем ми стана бално на душиоса, хем ми стана драго на сарцесо, че има ейтакви люде в нашса планино.*

'You've written it very well. On the one hand it hurt my soul, but on the other hand I felt joy in my heart, because there are that kind of people in our mountain.'

8b. *Оти айсе фтасуват дивисе ягоди - зуниси им викаме, са сетих ага бех мучек име други пак диви ягоди ама малко по инакви и по едърки.*

'Because now wild strawberries get ripe - we call them *zunitsi*, now it came to my mind of when I was a kid, there were also wild strawberries but they were different and smaller.'

8c. *Адно время св. Бугродица мириснала адно китка и станала кормяста. И отъ била мума, га родила не рачила да зьомъ деянцину си. Врю людеть и жъвотнътъ я молили, ала та все не рачила. Най-сетя душла адна жеба с машку жепча на рабо [...]*

'Long time ago the holy Virgin smelled a flower and became pregnant. And because she was a maiden, when she gave birth, she did not want to take her own child. All the people and animals begged her, but she did not want to. At the end came a frog with a little frog on the back [...]

For the use of Pomak in Turkey we do not have much information except for the study by KAHL (2007) who mentions the use of the Turkish alphabet in the informal writing of Pomak.

Finally, in Greece, the attempts to write Pomak in formal publications have always been criticized because of the script, whether it was Greek or Latin (MANOVA 2011). Since the 1990s several publications about Pomak have been issued,<sup>18</sup> e.g., KARAHODZA (1996), THEOHARIDIS (1996), and ROGO (2002), using the Greek script; KOKKAS (2004a, 2004b) and the tale published by PAKETHRA (2006), using the Latin script. A lot of criticisms to these publications were related to the funding sources: in the case of KARAHODZA (1996) the editor is strikingly the Greek army and in all the other cases funding was provided by Greek businessman Prodromos Emfietzoglou either through the cultural centre PAKETHRA (*Politistiko Anaptixiako Kendro Thrakis*) or directly through his company *Mihaniki*. Independent of the funding and the political agenda behind these publications, the use of either the Greek or the Latin script is understandable from a functional perspective in that they are both widespread in the community due to schooling in Greek or/and Turkish. The alternative of adding the Cyrillic as a third script would most likely further complicate the situation for a community that has had difficulties with integrating the existing bilingual educational system (TZEVELEKOU et al. 2005).<sup>19</sup>

Beyond the choice of the script, we note that the use of Pomak in writing is very restricted. For example, Pomak is not used in the Pomak local newspaper *Zagalisa* which is instead published in Greek. Recently, however, the use of Pomak is favored in the local newspaper *Natpresh* by Pomak native speaker Sebaidin Karahodza; also see <http://natpresh.blogspot.fr/>.

As far as informal writing is concerned, Pomak is never used in contexts in which we usually find other minority languages such as social media. To give an example of one Facebook network of a young Pomak speaker with one thousand Facebook friends, we note that not one instance of Pomak is found despite the network being composed of native Pomak speakers. Instead, the exchanges mainly take place in Greek and Turkish. In private

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<sup>18</sup> In some of these publications, native Pomak speakers have worked in collaboration with Greek authors without associating their names to the publications. Personal research and interviews conducted during the years 2000 by the first author with the authors and collaborators of these publications but also with other members of the Pomak communities, confirm that this choice was due to strong, negative pressure from the Pomak communities on those in-group members who promoted the Pomak language.

<sup>19</sup> We can mention here the Greek-funded program, *Programma Ekpaidefsis Mousoulmanopaidon*, which was targeting specifically the students of the Muslim minority of Greek Thrace.

text-messaging between teenagers and young adults, however, Pomak is being mixed together with Greek and Turkish using the Latin script.

## 6. *Summary and discussion*

In conclusion, it appears that Pomak is not being actively promoted by Pomak communities or by the authorities of Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece. Individual Pomak speakers who promote their language in formal publications are extremely rare and Pomak is not being used by its speakers in social media. The result is a strong language shift in Greece and in Turkey towards Turkish, and dialect levelling in Bulgaria under the influence of Standard Bulgarian. A change in language attitudes is thus crucial for the maintenance of this precious Slavic linguistic inheritance.

In relation to the topic of this volume, the question that we may ask is whether the creation of a Pomak literary language would facilitate language transmission and revitalization of Pomak. To answer this question, it would be necessary to take a close look at the results from other European contexts. Language policies in Europe have promoted the expansion of several minority and regional languages from informal to formal settings and from oral to written communication (although in some cases, strong, literary traditions may have existed in the past). To achieve this goal, most communities opted for the standardization of their oral varieties, a choice that aims at institutional legitimacy and unification of an otherwise heterogeneous linguistic setting. However, experience from the French regional languages within the French state shows that the creation of a literary language and its use for literary production, in media, and education is not necessarily successful in reversing the language-shift process. Indeed, despite standardization or bilingual curricula for various regional languages in France, it appears that there is little language transmission in informal settings and no use of the regional languages in everyday life; see Proceedings of the French National Assembly on the Future of Regional languages, June 3, 2014. More generally, it has been shown that although education in a recently standardized language allows for new speakers to acquire an otherwise non-transmitted language, the group of new speakers is often in an antagonistic relation with the group of traditional speakers (ÁLVAREZ-CÁCCAMO 1993, O'ROURKE, PUJOLAR AND RAMALLO 2015).

As a result, alternatives to the standardized model of minority languages are increasingly being discussed in the literature. As MATRAS (2015) notes:

with changing ideologies, the idea of regulating language has become less acceptable. Instead, the paradigm shift that is influenced



by postmodernist and postnational thinking lends support to diversity and pluralism (MATRAS 2015, 298).

The author argues more specifically for the successful examples of policies promoting pluralism in the codification of Romani (MATRAS 2015).

Similarly, COSTAOUEC (2013) criticizes the dominant models for minority languages in Europe and suggests an alternative view:

It is probably time to reconsider minority languages' emancipation within the framework of a renovated multilingualism. [...] Today the only available option seems to be turning themselves into 'state languages' or 'official languages' (this is what Catalonia continually claims, for example). This solution reproduces on the regional scale what state-nations have done on a larger scale during the last centuries: they have built and imposed a controversial identity between nation and language, people and language. We can perhaps introduce into the debate the idea that people's emancipation and languages' emancipation would benefit from internationalism and the obliteration of borders, be it regional or national, rather than from the multiplication of barriers (COSTAOUEC 2013, 188).

To conclude, should Pomak become a key component of a transnational Pomak identity, the choice to codify a Pomak language or not would be open to language activists and language planners.

#### ***Acknowledgments***

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#### ***Abbreviations***

1	first person	F	feminine
2	second person	FUT	future
3	third person	M	masculine
A	addressee's sphere	N	neuter
ACC	accusative	IMP	imperative
AOR	aorist	PN	proper name
D	distal	PAST	past
DAT	dative	S	speaker's sphere

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