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THE SOCIAL PROGRAMS RUN BY THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH DURING THE PERIOD OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Corina CACE¹, Sorin CACE², Victor NICOLĂESCU³

Abstract

In the extremely fluid space marked by the strongest economic crisis of the past 60 years, one can observe that the state and the Church became institutions undergoing major changes, while religion becomes shelter for the people in risk of social and economic exclusion. The world economic crisis which started in 2008 shows major changes in the public policies, particularly in the social policies, and the Church may play a major role for the support of the vulnerable groups, now that the budget allocations traditionally administered by the State decreased. With the intention to identify these changes in the religious structures from Romania, we attempted to analyse the data available with the Romanian Orthodox Church. Thus, the complementarity of the assistance to the vulnerable groups through the social programs developed by the Church is beneficial both for the state and for the Church itself due to the predominant social-philanthropic character of the support provided to the faithful people during this period of economic crisis. The paper also reveals the framework of the social entrepreneurship in relation with the religious structures and launches the challenge to continue capitalising on the relation between the expenditure for welfare coming from public funds and the different dimensions of religiousness, particularly by integrating the activities of social assistance.

Keywords: programs; Church; State; vulnerable groups; social entrepreneurship.

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Introduction

In the postmodernist societies, the stress on the economic accumulation is overtaken by the increased importance given to the quality of life. In most countries, the norms oriented towards accumulation specific to the industrial society yielded in front of a very wide normative field which allows the choice of lifestyles and the freedom of individual expression. The shift from materialist values, which stress the economic and physical security, towards post-materialist values, which emphasise the freedom of personal expression and the interest for the quality of life (Cojocaru, 2006), became the widest dimension of change and the resurgence of the religious faiths documents new valences of the individual choices.

The postmodernist values brought a change to the political agenda of the developed industrial societies: there was a shift from the focus, at any cost, on the economic growth, towards the increased spending on environmental protection (Inglehart, 1997). A shift has also been noticed from the political cleavage due to social conflicts to cultural debates on the quality of life. While in the past the political conflicts dominated the stage with such a vigour that many thinkers accepted the Marxist perspective on the supremacy of the economic, today this perspective seems less plausible and the role of some traditional institutions is brought back into debate (such as the case of the Church). In this extremely fluid space marked by the strongest world economic crisis of the past 60 years, the religion became again a shelter for the people in situation of social and economic exclusion. The State and the Church became the institutions which undergo major changes during the periods of crisis, because of two reasons: (a) the state reduces its expenditure, it rethinks the welfare policies and distributes, according to measurable criteria, the aid asked by the people in distress. At the same time, the State loses from the credibility ensured by the previous welfare parameters due both to the incertitude of the measures taken in order to alleviate the effects of the crisis, and to the messages transmitted by the political decision-makers regarding these measures. (b) the Church is confronted both with the stronger offer of partnership from the State in order to cope with the crisis, and with the request of the people hit by the effects of the crisis, for spiritual and material support. In this shift of situations, the Church strengthened its role in the society and in the community, and the diversification of the adopted measures fits within a specific plan for the revival of this institution – the building new churches, initiation and development of social assistance programs, presence in the poor communities.

In our analysis, of the four dimensions of religion which are thought to transcend to socio-cultural context (the doctrinal dimension, the ritual dimension, the organisational dimension and the moral dimension (Scarvaglieri, 1977: 33-40), we will attempt to extract the specific aspects of the organisational dimension, the particularities of the social programs implemented by the Church. Within this

sinusoidal diagram in which the State and the Church cross paths, it is important to identify and argue the complementary directions of each institution in the attempt to cope with the economic crisis which has a major impact on the Romanian society.

The national context of the religious practice

From the perspective of the national context, in terms of the religious identity declared by the Romanian citizens, almost 87% of them stated to be of Orthodox religion, 4.73% of Romano-Catholic religion, 3.23% of Reformed religion, 1.5% of Pentecostal religion, the other religious cults having less than 1%, as shown in the 2002 Population and Dwelling Census (Table 1). The data to be presented regarding the 2011 Census will use different data sets⁴.

Table 1. Population by religion

	Total	Urban	Rural	Proportion
Population	21680974	11435080	10245894	100
Orthodox	18817975	9974610	8843365	86,79
Romano-Catholic	1026429	520815	505614	4,73
Reformed	701077	358878	342199	3,23
Pentecostal	324462	129862	194600	1,5
Greek-Catholic	191556	118438	73118	0,88
Baptist	126639	68008	58631	0,58
Seventh day Adventist	93670	33313	60357	0,43
Muslims	67257	52950	14307	0,31
Unitarian	66944	33087	33857	0,31
Evangel Christian	44476	21649	22827	0,2
Old rite Christians	38147	12609	25538	0,17

⁴ The list of the cults acknowledged in Romania, according to Law nr. 489/2006 regarding the religious freedom and the general conditions of the cults, published in the Official Monitor Part I, nr. 11/8.01.2007: the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Timisoara, the Romano-Catholic Church, the Romanian Church united with Rome, Greek-Catholic, Archiepiscopate of the Armenian Church, Old Russian Christian Church, Reformed Church, Evangelic Church, Lutheran Evangelic Church, Unitarian Church from Transylvania, Union of the Baptist Christian churches, Evangelic Christian Church, Union of the Evangelic Christian churches, Romanian Evangelic Church, Pentecostal Union, the Apostolic Church of God, the Seventh-Day Adventist church, Federation of the Jewish Communities, the Muslim cult, the religious organisations of Jehovah's witnesses.

Evangelic Lutheran Synod-Presbyterian	27112	18226	8886	0,12
Evangelic	18178	10856	7322	0,08
Augustan Evangelic	8716	5887	2829	0,04
Mosaic	6057	5843	214	0,02
Other religion	89196	45672	43524	0,41
No religion	12825	7999	4826	0,06
Atheists	8524	7680	844	0,04
Not stated	11734	8698	3036	0,05

Source: Population and dwelling Census, 18 March 2002

Another statistic indicator regarding the relation of the Romanians with the church regards the inventory of the cult units from Romania (which started in 2003). Thus, in August 2011, the inventory of cult units amounted to 18,425 locations (Table 2). The bulk of cult units (70.22%) belonged to the Orthodox Church; however, the proportion of the cult units of the Orthodox Church was lower than the proportion of the people who stated to be of Orthodox religion in 2002 (87%). The situation is reversed for the other religious cults in terms of the comparative analysis of the proportion of cult units and the proportion of people belonging to these cults.

Table 2. Cults and cult units in Romania

Orthodox	12.966	70.22%
Roman-Catholic	1.135	6%
Reformed	965	5.27%
Baptist	1.275	6.92%
Seventh-day Adventist	775	4.25%
Evangelic (Lutheran + C.A.+ S.P.)	504	2.75%
Old Orthodox	168	0.92%
Mosaic	93	0.50%
Muslim	79	0.43%
Greek-Catholic	271	1.45%
Unitarian (Evangelic)	141	0.76%
Armenian-Gregorian	7	0.03%
Jehovah's witnesses	72	0.40%
TOTAL	18.426	100.00%

Source: <http://www.culte.ro/LacasuriCult.aspx>

Different comparative analyses can be made in terms of the trends of religiosity in Romania, which provide additional specific dimensions to the national context: (1) *From the historical perspective* – the religious practice increased significantly between 1993-2008, the proportion of the people going every month to church increasing from 30% in 1993 to 48% in 2008 (according to the 1993, 1999, 2005 and 2008 surveys by World Values Survey). Regarding the residential area, the proportion of the urban people going to church increased by 7% in 2008 compared to 1993. (2) *From the regional perspective* – according to the survey by World Values Survey, Romania is on the third position in Europe (after Poland and Italy) in terms of the frequency of going to church, but on the first position among the other predominantly Orthodox countries. Romania scored the highest value in Europe (9.2 on a scale from 1 to 10, “1-no importance at all” to “10-very important”) to the question “How important is God in your life?” (3) *From the confessional⁵ perspective* – the recent analyses show that there are differences in terms of the religious behaviour specific to each confession, as shown by the responses to the question “How important is religion in your life?” Although 82.2% of the people who stated to be Orthodox evaluated the religion as important and very important for their life, the proportion is lower than for other confessions (Greek-Catholic, Roman-Catholic, Protestants, Neo-protestants and Muslims) (Table 3).

Table 3. How important is religion in your life?

	Very important	Rather important	Little important	Very little/not important at all
Orthodox	35.8	46.4	9.3	1.4
Greek-Catholic	45.8	42.6	5.3	1.3
Roman-Catholic	52.5	34.1	5.9	0.3
Protestants	44.0	38.9	9.9	3.3
Neo-protestants	74.2	15.3	3.4	1.7
Muslims	73.6	21.8	2.6	2.0

Source: „Religion and religious behaviour”, Ovidiu Voicu coordinator, Soros Foundation, Program Election Studies in Romania, 2011

In terms of the tolerance of the confessions active in Romania, the Orthodox people, compared to the other religions included in the survey, have a general tolerance expressed by a high level of acceptance of other religions; they consider

⁵ The survey „Religion and religious behaviour” is the first full analysis of the religious phenomenon among the Romanian population, which investigates the behaviour and the relation of the most important confessions active in Romania with the policies and political life.

least among the other religions that only the church-goers can be considered faithful people (Soros, 2011) (Table 4).

Table 4. How important is religion in your life?

	People who don't go to church are not faithful	All those not abiding by the laws of God must be punished	Each religion or faith is right in its own way
Orthodox	17.7	35.8	79.1
Greek-Catholic	23.5	38.1	71.9
Roman-Catholic	20.2	30.1	83.1
Protestants	22.3	36.8	86.9
Neo-protestants	42.4	41.3	56.6
Muslims	32.4	63.3	91.2

Source: „Religion and religious behaviour”, Ovidiu Voicu coordinator, Soros Foundation, Program Election Studies in Romania, 2011

Before the onset of the present economic crisis, there was an idea running, that the religious behaviour revived after the fall of the communism, within the context of the “image of two Europe, one in religious effervescence after the lifting of the restrictions imposed by the communist regime, and another in which secularization advances slowly” (Voicu, 2007: 22). It was also very clear the idea of a higher level of religiousness in response to the interaction between nationalist feelings and the social investment in religion (Voicu, 2010). The world economic crisis which started in 2008 triggered major changes in the public policies, particularly in the social policies; within this context, the role which the Church can play for the vulnerable groups is greater than ever due to the cuts in the budgets traditionally administered by the State.

In the attempt to identify these changes in the religious structures from Romania, we undertook to review the data available at the Romanian Orthodox Church, considering both that it addresses the largest category of faithful people and the transposition in the social plan of the recent investments in the infrastructure of the cult units. We also intended to bring forward the social valences of the programs run by the Romanian Orthodox Church, even if they reflect only part of the contemporary Romania (Chiriac, 2005: 7).

The economic crisis and the investments in Church infrastructure

It seems that the financial crisis affects stronger some specific groups, impacting on their incomes and purchasing power, while the conditions of their participation in the community life is gradually deteriorating. The borders of the social

exclusion and poverty are not always observable and the relation between the income and social exclusion is not univocal. The additional access to occupation is not always the safest way of protection against social exclusion and poverty (Brăgaru, 2010). From the extremely high levels of poverty to the poverty of the employed people, the need for complex and coordinated measures is imminent due to the marginalised individual people and groups which don't have enough income and which have difficulties with joining the labour market and in accessing the common life of the community. On the other hand, measures must be also taken for the groups living at the limit of the social exclusion spectrum and which cannot secure enough income, even if they are not excluded.

Although the social problems have common traits, the possibilities and mechanisms of control differ radically; thus, there were at least two forms of reaction at the EU level, which affected differently the EU member states:

Rapid reactions of the international organisms (G20), but controversial at the same time regarding the long-term effects within the member states. Thus, G20 decided to direct 1.1 thousands billion USD (832 billion euro) towards IMF and other institutions and to control even more tightly the financial markets, including by initiating measures to promote transparency and to protect against the threats to the stability and against assuming excessive risks. The London summit (April 2, 2009) represented the second stage of G20 efforts to control the world financial crisis – the worst recession after the 1930 decade (the previous reunion took place at Washington in November the year before). In order to support the countries most affected by the crisis, the leaders approved the supplementation of IMF funds by 500 billion USD, with the support of 12 countries. This mechanism, hailed by the European Union, allowed some member states to take loans from the IMF in order to avoid a deepened recession, but the effects of the restoration policies promoted by other entities, different from the EU, are yet to be formulated.

The delayed reactions of the European bodies which will hopefully protect entirely the interests of all member states. Thus, in November 2008, the European Commission announced a package of revival measures worth of 200 billion euro (about 170 billion euro will come from the national budgets of the member states, while the EU and the European Bank of Investments (EBI) will supply together 30 billion euro), but the quantification of the process was difficult to accomplish. The Commission has also proposed to simplify the criteria for support from the European Social Fund (ESF), rescheduling the expenditures and increasing the down payments as of the beginning of 2009, so that the member states have earlier access to funds amounting to 1.8 billion euro used to consolidate the active policies from the labour market, to redirect the support for the vulnerable categories, to intensify the actions of development of competencies and to decide for full EU financing of the projects run during this period. The Commission suggested making changes in the European fund for adjustment to globalization (EGF), which was conceived to support the unemployed in their efforts to find

other jobs. If accepted, the proposals will give EGF the possibility to intervene faster with funds for professional formation and for employment projects. The annual budget available under EGF aegis amounts to 500 million euro. The European Commission has also started a new instrument for micro-financing which grants micro-credits to the small enterprises or to the unemployed who want to start own business.

The European Council of June 2010 adopted the Europe 2020 Strategy for economic growth and employment, confirming all the quantifiable objectives set at the EU level. According to the goals of Europe 2020 Strategy, the European employment strategy aims to create more jobs, better paid jobs throughout the EU territory. To this purpose, the strategy encourages the measures aiming to ensure the accomplishment, by 2020, of three major goals: 75% of the people aged 20-64 must be active on the labour market; decrease of the school dropout to less than 10% and increase up to at least 40% the proportion of higher education graduates in the population aged 30-34; reduction by at least 20 million of the number of people in poverty and social exclusion or at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Some social groups are more threatened by poverty: for instance, the families with children – particularly the large families and the single parent families – the old people, the people with disabilities and the immigrants. In all groups, women are more vulnerable than men. The way in which poverty affects people is complex and interdependent with the social exclusion. Besides the well-known problems such as insufficient dwelling conditions or the lack of a dwelling, the people living in poverty may also be confronted with (www.2010againstpoverity.eu): health problems and low access to health care services, low access to educational, training and leisure activities, financial exclusion and over-indebting, limited access to the modern technology such as the Internet.

Under the motto “Stop poverty now”, the European Commission and the Spanish Presidency of the EU declared 2010 as the European year of fight against poverty and social exclusion. This campaign has the purpose of bringing to the front of the European Union, all throughout 2010, the fight against poverty which affects directly one in every six Europeans. The European Union ensures the framework by which the member states elaborate their own priorities and strategies by taking into consideration the multidimensional nature of poverty and by focusing on the following coordinates (www.2010againstpoverity.eu): elimination of children poverty and of poverty within the family; facilitation of the access on the labour markets, the access to education and training; curb discrimination and tackling the gender and age aspects of poverty; fight against financial exclusion and over-indebting; fight against the improper living conditions and against exclusion from dwellings; promote the social inclusion of the vulnerable groups.

Vladimír Špidla, EU Commissioner for occupation, social affairs and equal opportunity, reiterated the constant support for the implementation of the policies

for poverty prevention and control: “One of six Europeans struggles everyday to earn a living, but poverty can also affect us, the others, and our society in its whole. Although most instruments of fight against poverty are at the national level, three quarters of the Europeans expect assistance from the EU too. The European year puts this aspect on the top position of the agenda, so that the entire Europe join forces to fight against poverty and social exclusion” (www.europa.eu). Thus, the idea that the European year 2010 has the purpose to increase the awareness of the causes and consequences of poverty in Europe, consolidated both for the key-players such as the governments, and for the social partners and the general public. It also has the purpose to mobilise different partners to fight against poverty, to promote the social integration and inclusion, and to encourage the elaboration of national and European policies to solve the problems related to poverty and social exclusion.

At the European level, there are major variations both concerning the financing of the religious structures by the State (APADOR-CH, 2008: 9-11), and concerning the religion-state relations in order to enable predicting a consistent involvement of the religious structures in the limitation of crisis consequences. Briefly, in our evaluation we consider the three patterns of the relations between religion, churches and religious groups functioning in the member states (Dinu, 2009: 18): (1) The pattern characterised by the existence of a National church or of a majority religion (United Kingdom, Denmark, Greece, Malta, Finland); (2) The pattern relying on the strict separation between the church and state, but with reciprocal relations and support; (3) The pattern relying on the reciprocal independence of the church and the state (Luxemburg, Belgium, Poland, Spain, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Hungary, the Baltic States).

At the national level, within the context of the economic crisis, some representatives of the civil society criticised the allocation in February 2009, through the State Budget, a sizeable amount of money for the construction and reparation of 816 churches (www.state.gov.ro). Another investment, the Nation’s Cathedral, is supported by about 40% of the Romanians (7% stated their full support, 34% agree), while 29% are against or totally against and 10% have no opinion yet. Within the context of the current economic crisis, a lower proportion of the population supports the use of public funds for the construction of this cathedral: in 2000, 74% of the Romanian people considered that the Orthodox Church must be financed from public money, while in June 2011, only 54% still agreed (partially or totally) with this kind of financing. The most recent survey has shown that most respondents selected the answer “The Cathedral should be built only with Church money” (32%); 26% consider that the bulk of funds should be Church money, and only 20% consider that the bulk of funds should come from public money, while only 10% of the Romanians consider that the project should be financed fully by the state.

However, on the background of the economic crisis which has deeply disturbed the Romanian society, the Church and the Army decreased between 2009-2011 in terms of the trust of the population. Thus, the survey conducted by IMAS and published in February 2011 (Adevărul, 2011), in January 2011, the Church was rated at 81.9% confidence, compared to January 2009 when it was rated at 89.3% confidence. The Army decreased from 71.1% in January 2009 to 63.5% confidence in January 2011.

The brief presentation shows that the Church made investments within the context of the economic crisis, which was criticised by part of the civil society; however, this action is supported by the importance of community aggregation within the context in which the risk for social marginalisation is rather high. In virtue of other opinions that the State should be neutral in relation with Church actions, it is increasingly significant to join the contents and symbols of religion with the exercise of the state functions (Ladeur, K.H., Augsberg I., 2007). In this direction, the complementarities of the assistance provided to the vulnerable groups through the social programs developed by the Church brings benefits both at the state level and to the Church itself due to the predominant social-philanthropic character of the support provided to the faithful people during this period of economic crisis.

Perspectives of the social entrepreneurship within the Church

A new projection of the social assistance services was noticed recently within the Romanian Orthodox Church, services provided by the administrative-organisational structures of the church on the background of enhanced social and philanthropic activities. Thus, article 3 from ROF, the system of social assistance within BOR (Romanian Orthodox Church), sets several objectives of the social network, as part of the integration and professional organisation of the church structures, highlighting that they stipulate just one objective with religious connotations, which shows the adaptation to the secular values of the Romanian society under change (Cojocaru, Cojocaru, Sandu, 2011).

Another argument which guides us in identifying the elements of change at the level of the social assistance services provided by the Romanian Orthodox Church refers to the approval during this period of economic crisis of a specific program for involvement in the support of the vulnerable groups – the Pastoral and social program in times of economic crisis, which will run at the level of parishes, monasteries and eparchial centres in agreement with the set objectives (a) Assistance of the families of old people living on low pensions; (b) Assistance of the poor families with many children; (c) Assistance of the poor people that are ill). On the basis of these objectives, a number of 14 measures and principles were set, which bring the necessary orientation to the specific actions within the

organisations structures of the church. This range of activities recommended by the leading bodies of the Church (the Saint Synod) forms the means of intensifying the efforts of the clerical bodies at the community level. An increasing dynamics of church activities (social assistance services) at the community level was noticed. For our analysis we used documents from 2009-2010 showing the dynamics of the social-philanthropic activities (*Social-philanthropic activity within the eparchies of the Romanian Patriarchy in 2009 and the Report of the social-philanthropic sector of the patriarchal administration regarding the social-philanthropic activity conducted within the eparchies of the Romanian Patriarchy in 2010*).

The staff involved in the social-philanthropic sector increased significantly for the categories of social workers (from 56 social workers in 2009 to 65 in 2010), social assistants (from 141 accredited social assistants in 2009 to 148 in 2010) and of the people with higher education (from 273 people with higher education in 2009, to 433 in 2010), as well as for other categories of staff (from 443 people in 2009, to 592 in 2010) (Table 5).

Table 5. Staff involved in social-philanthropic activities in 2009 and 2010

2009	2010
29 counsellors	29 counsellors
33 eparchial inspectors	33 eparchial inspectors
141 accredited social assistants	148 accredited social assistants
273 people with higher education, theological, medical, psychological, counsellors, economists, project managers	433 people with higher education, theological, medical, psychological, counsellors, economists, project managers
56 social workers	65 social workers
2192 volunteers of the philanthropic committees	2192 volunteers of the philanthropic committees
443 people from other categories of staff	592 people from other categories of staff

Source: http://www.patriarhia.ro/ro/opera_social_filantropica/biroul_pentru_asistenta_social_filantropica.html, data processed by the authors

Another indicator which shows increases regards the higher number of social-philanthropic units between 2008 and 2010, from 345 in 2008, to 394 in 2009 and to 450 functional structures in 2010. The number of social programs runs by the eparchies increased by 66.8% in 2010 compared to 2009 (from 335 in 2009 to 559 in 2010). It is significantly that the number of programs with public financing decreased significantly, while the number of social programs run with external funds and from own funds increased significantly (Table 6).

Table 6. Social programs run within BOR eparchies in 2009-2010

	Total	External funds	Public funds	Own funds	Funds from other organisations
2009	335	25	109	112	89
2010	559	62	41	443	89

Source: http://www.patriarhia.ro/ro/opera_social_filantropica/biroul_pentru_asistenta_social_filantropica.html, data processed by the authors

The number of beneficiaries of social projects increased by 63.4% from 2009 to 2010 (1,028,715 people and families in 2010 compared to 629,459 families and beneficiaries in 2009); the most important support was granted to the old people (660,201 beneficiaries in 2010, compared to 333,882 in 2009). In agreement with the social trends of the current period, which show higher poverty rates, the support for this category of people also increased, from 116,979 assisted families in 2009, to 179,583 beneficiary families in 2010) (Table 7).

Table 7. Number of beneficiaries of the social projects run within BOR eparchies in 2009-2010

	2009	2010
Children in the social structures of the Church, of the state, particularly in poor families, with no means of maintenance, or whose parents went abroad to work	152,270	151,270
People with disabilities	26,324	37,261
Old people	333,882	660,601
Poor families	116,979	179,583
Number of beneficiaries of social projects	629,459	1,028,715

Source: http://www.patriarhia.ro/ro/opera_social_filantropica/biroul_pentru_asistenta_social_filantropica.html, data processed by the authors

The social programs promoted and run by the Romanian Orthodox Church are in agreement with the Regulation for the organisation and functioning of the national system of social assistance of the Romanian Orthodox Church, document which aligns the activity of the territorial administrative units of the church with the principles and standards in the field of social assistance. Chapter IV, Human resources, states clearly that the “social worker activating in the social assistance structures of the Romanian Orthodox Church must observe the provisions of the laws enforced in the field of social assistance” (art. 20), and the most important effect at the level of the practical social assistance is the accreditation of the units providing social services (Table 8).

Table 8. Social units within the Romanian Orthodox Church

Location	Number if units	Accreditation			
		Accredited	Under accreditation	Not accredited	Data not available
Metropolitan church of Bucharest					
Archiepiscopate of Bucharest	67	11	5	1	0
Archiepiscopate of Tomis	6	3	3	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Târgoviște	3	0	3	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Argeș and Muscel	1	0	1	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Buzău and Vrancea	16	10	6	0	0
Archiepiscopate of the Lower Danube	36	10	26	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Slobozia and Călărași	9	4	5	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Alexandria and Teleorman	3	0	3	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Giurgiu	12	0	12	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Tulcea	6	1	5	0	0
Metropolitan church of MOLDOVA AND BUCOVINA					
Archiepiscopate of Iași	40	30	10	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Suceava and Rădăuți	8	8	0	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Roman and Bacău	7	0	7	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Huși	9	2	7	0	0
Metropolitan church of ARDEAL					
Archiepiscopate of Sibiu	38	22	16	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Covasna and Harghita	0	0	2	0	0
METROPOLITAN CHURCH OF CLUJ, ALBA, COVASNA AND MARAMURE?					
Archiepiscopate of Vad, Feleac and Cluj	18	13	5	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Alba Iulia	63	28	24	0	11
Orthodox episcopate of Oradea	11	7	4	0	0
Orthodox episcopate of Maramureș and Sătmăr	1	0	1	0	0
Orthodox episcopate of Sălaj	20	18	2	0	0

Metropolitan church of OLTENIA					
Archiepiscopate of Craiova	6	5	1	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Râmnic	7	4	2	0	1
Archiepiscopate of Severin and Strehaia	5	2	3	0	0
Orthodox episcopate of Slatina	3	0	1	0	2
Metropolitan church of BANAT					
Archiepiscopate of Timișoara	17	12	5	0	0
Archiepiscopate of Ardeal	10	3	4	2	0
Archiepiscopate of Caransebeș	7	3	2	2	0

Source: http://www.patriarhia.ro/ro/opera_social_filantropica/biroul_pentru_asistentia_social_filantropica.html, data processed by the authors

The major differences between the administrative-territorial structures in terms of adopting the standards for the provision of social and educational services bring into discussion the importance of promoting a new type of entrepreneurial behaviour by the special staff of the Church. Even though it seems difficult to reach a satisfactory level of observance of the ethic principles on a market torn by contradictions, the development of a social entrepreneurship with religious bases is a viable alternative perfectly compatible with the communities of the Romanian society.

The contemporary approaches reveal a wide range of theories regarding the entrepreneurship, many economic thinkers going with Schumpeter's ideas. Drucker amplified the role of opportunity, considering that it is not necessary for an entrepreneur to cause the change; rather it needs to exploit the opportunities of this change (in technology, consumer preferences, social norms etc.). Thus, an entrepreneur will always look for change; will seek to answer to the change, to exploit an opportunity. At the same time, it is not necessary of sufficient that starting a business is a condition for entrepreneurship: not any new business is entrepreneurial (Berea, Stoica and Brăgaru, 2010). Another aspect refers to the fact that the entrepreneurship would not necessarily suppose making a profit. In his work *Innovation and Entrepreneurship* (1985), Peter Drucker said that the best proof of entrepreneurship is located historically at the moment of the establishment of the modern universities, the American ones particularly. An important distinction is made by Stevenson and Jarillo (1990), who brought a significant element on the definition of the opportunity-oriented entrepreneurship by showing the difference between the entrepreneurial management and the administrative management: (a) The *entrepreneurial management* – refers to following the opportunity without making reference to the controlled resources; the entrepreneurs mobilize the resources of other people in order to accomplish their entrepreneurial objectives; (b) The *administrative management* – the

administrators are limited in their vision and action by the resources available to them.

The general characteristics of the entrepreneurship is that it can be applied both in the economic field (of business) and in the social field, referring to a behaviour that can be displayed in multiple ways (Cace, Cace, Nicolăescu, 2011). The social entrepreneurship relies on the strong tradition of the entrepreneurial theory and research, and the social entrepreneurs are a type of entrepreneurs with a social mission. Although there is a common body of reference for the economic and social entrepreneurship, one must reveal the differences in debates, with the purpose to capitalise on the opportunities existing at the level of the religious communities. From the point of view of the services of social assistance provided by the staff involved in the social programs of BOR, one may consider that many of the features of the social entrepreneurship may be assumed within the religious action, which will make the activities sustainable.

The central mission of the social entrepreneurs is explicit and central, which makes them develop a different perception to evaluate the opportunities: the impact derived from their mission becomes the core criterion, rather than making a profit (Cace, Arpinte, Cace, Cojocaru, 2011). The wealth that is created by the social entrepreneurs is just the mean to accomplish a goal, while the creation of wealth is a way for the economic entrepreneurs to measure the creation of value. In this case, the religious entrepreneurship involved in social activities accomplishes completely the purpose of the Church.

As a definition of the social entrepreneurship based on responsibility and discipline, we may give the following formulation by Gregory Dees (1998): *The social entrepreneurs play the role of the agents of change in the social field by: adopting a mission and creating and supporting the social value (not just the private value); acknowledging and displaying the will to follow the new opportunities in accomplishing this mission; engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation and learning; free action, with no limit due to the available resources; manifesting a high responsibility for the constitutive elements and for the created results.* The idealised definition of the social entrepreneurship in relation with the religious structures is differentiated in various manners by the characteristics of the sectorial leaders, considering that the person meeting most of the above attributes will be closer to the pattern of social entrepreneur. The person which will be much more innovative in his/her activity and who will create more social improvements will be perceived as being more entrepreneurial. In this respect, the Church appears to be more active in the absorption of the structural funds allocated to Romania for 2007-2013 displaying an efficient activity of implementation, considered at the national level.

This form of social entrepreneurship with religious basis may be in agreement with the fact that the society displays “a new form of religion, a form of religion,

institutionally unspecialised, which has a private construct” (Luckmann T., 1967: 27), and with the acknowledgement of some principles of the economic personalism (Comsa P., Munteanu C., 2008).

Conclusions

The obvious form which materialises the social functions of the Romanian Orthodox Church fits in a wider stream which is the object of social research. Thus, the revival of the social involvement of the Church is considered to tackle four components (Martin, 1991, p. 28): (1) Increased importance of the religious behaviour understood as socio-cultural transformation; (2) Redefinition of the role of the church within the social-political system; (3) Rediscovery of the role of religion in the construction of the collective identity; (4) Instrumentalization of religiosity with the purpose of consolidating the political legitimacy within a context characterised by instability, crisis of values and political suspicion.

Although one can notice a higher complexity of the theories regarding the status of religion in the contemporary societies (Tschennen, 1991), it is important to conduct proper analyses on the complementarity of the role played by the structures providing social assistance services; sometimes, the application of qualitative criteria might bring significant differences at the level of the actual social interventions on the vulnerable groups (Cojocaru, Cojocaru, 2011). The analysis shows the increased dynamics of the social programs run by the Romanian Orthodox Church within the context of the current economic crisis, doubled by the inventory of the infrastructure investments determined by a specific political support for them. From this perspective, one may observe that the volatility of the incipient welfare state by the accession to the European Union produced a stressed form of religious social mobilization and of uncertain political effervescence. While the effects of the economic crisis would not have been so dramatic at the level of the narrowing social dimension, the situation would have followed the standard previsions regarding the fact that the expansion of the welfare financed by the state will decrease or even eliminate the political role of religion (Gill and Lundsgaarde, 2004). This approach provides the possibility to continue exploring the relations between the expenditure for welfare from the public funds and the different dimensions of religiousness, particularly by integrating the activities of social assistance.

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