This paper attempts to reveal the role of central governments, represented by the deconcentrated (territorial) governmental institutions, and the local governments' public policies in ethnically mixed areas of Romania, in influencing the development of inter-ethnic relations in general, and the occasional ethnic bias that can be observed at the local level, in particular.

The main research questions are: in what conditions do local governments improve or worsen inter-ethnic relations in Romania? In what conditions can the central government mitigate the local ethnic tensions and conflicts?

In Romania, the ethnic minority issues local governments are confronted with spring from two main sources of tension: the tension between the Romanians and the Hungarians, and the tension between the local (relative) majority and the Roma communities. The two types of relations are quite different in nature, though some similarities do exist, and are not insignificant. In this paper we will focus on the relationship between the Romanians and the Hungarians. In this respect we will distinguish between two levels of the ethnic minority issue: the national level and the local level. At the local level, the minority community is represented by the ethnic community that is statistically in minority in that settlement. In this sense the ethnic Romanians can form a minority community in some municipalities of Romania, but we keep in mind that their situation is not the same as that of the national minorities, in the more common definition.

**Empirical Sources**

The research entailed carrying out 58 interviews with local government (LG) representatives, public servants and representatives of the local minority communities in two municipalities, Sfântu Gheorghe and Cluj. In addition to the interviews, 572 questionnaires have been completed within the investigated local communities. For the selection of the respondents, we applied the quota sampling method. The used quotas were age group, sex, city quarters.

The main reason that motivated the selection of the two municipalities is the fact that in both settlements the inter-ethnic relations are among the worst in Romania, the elected local authorities being perceived in each of the cases the main source of the tensions.

The two selected sites are situated in the central and western region of Transylvania and both are capital cities in their county. Sfântu Gheorghe has been an administrative center since the middle ages. Since 1878 it has been the main settlement of the county, in spite of the fact that the number of its inhabitants was hardly around two-three thousands throughout the 19th century. According to the findings of the 1850 census, of the total number of 2302 inhabitants 422 (18%) were Romanians, 62 were Roma, and the rest Hungarians. Between 1850 and 1910 most of the Romanian population was probably assimilated into Hungarian, since during the 1910 census only 108 people declared that they were Romanian. The industry of the town began to bloom in the 20th century, but the significant population growth started only in the 1960s. While the number of inhabitants in 1910 was 8,665, by 1966 it reached already twice as much (20,768), out of whom 2,560 were Romanians, 17,739 Hungarians, and 331 Roma.
In 1977, out of the 39,524 inhabitants 5,756 were Romanians, 32,784 Hungarians, and 758 declared themselves Roma. In 1992, the population of the town, including the surrounding villages, was 68,359. Out of these, 16,092 (23%) were Romanians, and 51,073 (75%) Hungarians. The quick growth of the Romanian population in the second half of the 20th century was due mainly to the fact that most of the Romanians moved to the city from other settlements and from the neighboring counties (especially Brasov and Bacău).

In 1850, in the area currently occupied by the city of Cluj there lived 19,612 people, out of whom 12,317 (63 %) were Hungarians, and 4116 (21%) Romanians, but within the administrative unit occupied by the town at that time, only 14% were Romanians. According to the census data, there were 585 Gypsies in the town at that time. The population of Cluj reached 100,000 at the beginning of the 20th century, which made it the biggest town in Transylvania. Approximately 15-20% of the population were Romanian at that time. By 1930, of the 115,000 inhabitants, 35% were Romanians, 45% Hungarians, the rest of the population comprised Jews, Germans and other minorities. By 1992, the population of the city reached 326,000, out of whom 75% were Romanians, and 22% Hungarians.

As a consequence of these ethnocultural patterns characterizing the two cities, when we will refer in what follows to the local minority it will mean the Romanians in the case of Sfântu Gheorghe, and the Hungarians in the case of Cluj, their percentage ranging in both cases around 22-23% of the cities' total population.

Legal regulations of the ethnic issues and ethnic representation within the local public administration

Public administration in Romania is organized for the time being on two levels: state level public administration and local public administration (LPA). The state level public administration comprises two levels as well: central administration (including the presidency, the government and the specialized institutions of central state administration some of which are independent, some subordinated to the ministries) and territorial state administration, the latter consisting in deconcentrated state authorities functioning within the frameworks of the 42 territorial administrative units called counties (including the municipality of Bucharest which has a county status). The deconcentrated state authorities are embodied by the prefect, the representative of the Government in each of the counties, and the decentralized services of the different ministries or departments of the Government.

The structure of the local public administration is defined by articles 119-120 of the Constitution and by the Law on Local Public Administration (215/2001), the latter defining the territorial limits of the 42 counties, 262 towns and 2,686 communes of the country.

The main authorities of LPA in Romania are the following: the local council (the elected deliberative authority in each town or commune, with a large autonomy in deciding upon the priorities of the local community); the mayor (the elected executive authority in each town or commune, which is, at the same time, the representative of the state in the respective territorial administrative unit); the council of the county (an elected body which has the role to coordinate the activity of all of the local councils in the cities and communes which are to be found on the territory of the respective county); the president of the county council (the head of the county level public administration, elected by the councilors from among the council's members). The local council, the mayor and the county council are elected, in accordance with the Law on Local Elections, for a term of four years.

The prefect, as the representative of the government on the county level, has the following main competencies: to ensure the protection of national interests and the observance of law and order; to monitor the legality of administrative documents issued by local and county public administrative authorities; to appoint and dismiss heads of deconcentrated ministry or other central government services in the county; to order legally constituted bodies to take adequate measures to prevent infringement of the law and protect citizens’ rights; to ensure the fulfillment of nonmilitary defense; to present an annual report to the government on the general, economic, social, cultural and administrative status of the county; to present an annual account of the county council regarding the activities of the deconcentrated ministry and other central government services operating in the county; to exercise other powers as established by law or entrusted by the government. The prefect has the power to challenge unlawful acts adopted by local authorities through the Administrative Disputed Claims Court.

The new Law on Local Public Administration, issued in April 2001, provides important language rights for national minorities, legalizing bilingualism or multilingualism in local public administration, in cases in which a national minority represents more than 20% of the population in the respective
administrative territorial unit. These provisions include bilingual signs and notices, use of the minority languages in communication with local authorities, both written and oral, the obligation to publish in minority languages the information of general interest and the use of minority language in county or local council meetings if at least one-third of the councilors belong to a minority group, Romanian translation in those cases being mandatory.

In terms of employees within the LPAs minority under-representation is still a problem. Hungarians, for instance, comprise only 3.3% of employees working in the fields of public administration and its related services, in spite of the fact that they represent 7.1% of the total population. The situation is particularly difficult for Roma, who have no representation in the county and local councils either, and the presence of their representatives among the LPA staff is particularly scarce, in spite of the recommendations of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Improvement of the Situation of the Roma, adopted as Order of the Government no. 430/2001. It is expected that this situation may gradually improve due to entering into force of a recently adopted law (48/2002), aimed at preventing all forms of discrimination.

As concerns ethnic representation in Sfântu Gheorghe, of the 21 members of the city council, 18 are representatives of the Hungarian ethnic party (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania – DAHR) while 3 councilors are Romanian: 2 represent the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and 1 the Great Romania Party (GRP). Both the mayor and the deputy mayor, as well as the president and the two vice-presidents of the county council are Hungarians.

In Cluj, the city council includes 31 members, of whom 5 councilors represent the GRP, while the rest make up a loose coalition, with a hard core consisting in 8 DAHR representatives (ethnic Hungarians) and 16 from other “Romanian” parties: 6 SDP, 3 ChDNPP (Chistian-Democrat National Peasant Party), 2 PUNR (Party of the Romanian National Unity), 2 NLP (National Liberal Party), 1 AFR (Alliance for Romania) representatives, etc.

The mayor of the city belongs to the GRP; one of the deputy mayors is Hungarian, representing DAHR, while the other is a Romanian SDP representative. One of the vice-presidents of the county council is also Hungarian.

**Framing the problem of inter-ethnic relations**

In our analysis we observed the following general situation. On the level of the local communities, the relationships between the LG and the local ethnic minorities are characterized by the dominant interethnic relationships at the county level. Within this, the first is the relationship between the ethnic Hungarians and the Romanians. In the entire western part of Romania in the seven Transylvanian counties, with the significant proportion of the ethnic Hungarians, we can speak about the real impact of Romanian-Hungarian relations on the local public administration. The two counties that we have selected, Covasna and Cluj, represent two main cases.

In the first, the Hungarian minority is the majority population at the local level, and in the second case, the Hungarians are the minority at the local level also. In general, the relation is characterized by the fact that the representatives of the Hungarian community in the local administration try to consolidate their linguistic-cultural and symbolic representation, because they feel that as compared to the first half of the communist period (1946-1965), and more intensely after this, their symbolic position gradually worsened until 1989, after which it improved, but not enough. The gradual reduction of the influence they have in the public sphere is perceived as a threat to the equality of opportunities not only by the leaders, but also by a significant part of the population, too.

This strife meets the opposition and sometimes the resistance of the local Romanian community, whether they can really hinder the symbolic representation of the Hungarians in the public sphere or not. A significant part of the leaders of the local Romanian communities consider that it is unacceptable to change the ethnocultural status quo of the 1980s, which would mean that they have to give up the cultural hegemony they enjoyed during the last decade of the communist dictatorship.

**The role of local government in the evolution of inter-ethnic relations**

The research that has been carried out revealed that in each of the towns the representatives of both the Romanian and the Hungarian communities display two types of ethnopolitical discourse as regards the minority policy of LGs: one which we have called the *ethnocentric*, and another which might be labeled as the *open* discourse. The first emphasizes the absolut gains of the in-group, the latter lays emphasis on the relative gains of both communities and thus is more conciliatory in consequences.
The situation in Sfântu Gheorghe

Between 1975 and 1989, the employees of the local administration, especially the leaders, were of Romanian ethnicity. Since 1990, the Hungarians have dominated the local leadership. As a result of the above-presented historical reasons, the Hungarian political elite of the town decided to strengthen the Hungarian characteristic of the cities at both the symbolic, and the concrete level. Before 1989 the streets were mostly named after Romanian personalities, and Romanian historical events. At present, the Hungarian leaders of the town feel that now they have really "taken over" the power, while the Romanian community representatives feel that they have been marginalized, and are in a disadvantaged position. The prefect of the county is Romanian, appointed, as we have seen, by the government.

The Romanian local councilors and the Orthodox Church, as well as the leaders of the Andrei Șaguna Cultural Association, an influential NGO on local level, are promoters of the ethnocentric discourse. Open discourse is only promoted by people in lower positions, such as teachers, and some of the county councilors.

Based on the interviews conducted, one can state that the Romanian ethnocentric discourse points out the following topics that give rise to ethnic tension:

1. In order to occupy a position in the local council, one must speak Hungarian, which is discriminatory towards the Romanians who do not speak Hungarian.
2. According to the provisions of the law on local public administration, the meetings of the council may be held in Hungarian, and therefore the Romanian councilors are obliged to participate with the aid of interpreters who do simultaneous translation, which the Romanian councilors find humiliating and disadvantageous.
3. The Hungarian leaders of the town and the Romanian cultural organizations were planning to celebrate the day of St. George together, but since this did not come off, the festival turned into a "Hungarian" one.
4. The mayor's Office sued the Orthodox Church, the former demanding to be returned the land on which the Orthodox Church was built.
5. The names of the streets are constantly changed, and there are fewer and fewer streets that are reminiscent of Romanian personalities or events. As compared to this, some streets are named after Hungarians that "did wrong" to the Romanians.
6. In a house where, since 1799, there has been a Romanian school, the LG refuses to support the establishment of a school museum.
7. The county council did not manage to get either position of deputy prefect for a Romanian, though one quarter of the population of the county is Romanian.
8. Only monuments in memory of Hungarians are erected in the town; financial support for the reconstruction of the statue of Mihai Viteazu being repeatedly refused, and the erection of monuments of interest to the Romanians (a cross, for instance) proves to be impossible. The county council has also rejected to include in the coat of arms of the county a symbol of the Romanian population, an orthodox cross.

Problem no. 2 occurs in the open Romanian discourses also, but these references to the issue also include the solution: the Romanian members of the council would accept live translation; they are only bothered by the simultaneous translation equipment. The open discourse generally presents the problems as a consequence of ethnic segregation, rather than thematically.

The Hungarian discourse does not refer to points 3, 4 and 6 from the above list. The Hungarian ethnocentric discourse, which is dominant at the level of LG, does not admit that the policies of the mayor's office puts the Romanian population at a disadvantage, though they do admit that Hungarian has to be spoken in most places if one seeks employment, but they think knowledge of Hungarian is necessary in the given circumstances. Topic no. 2 does occur, but it is generally considered a symbolic manifestation against the introduction of the Hungarian language, and it is not handled as a real problem. Most Hungarian interviewees consider that the Romanian councilors perceive the public use of the Hungarian language a mere anti-Romanian manifestation, because all of the councilors, regardless to their ethnic background, speak Romanian. The Hungarians are convinced that the way the street names were changed is legitimate.
Most recently, the political pact (protocol) that is under negotiations between Covasna county SDP and DAHR representatives includes the provision that streets shall be named after Romanian personalities also, but with names that the Hungarian community also accepts. The issue of the Romanian school museum is complicated because the house is inhabited by a Roma family, for whom the Romanians have arranged with a company to build a new house, but the mayor has not yet allocated land for this purpose.

The open Hungarian discourse admits that when naming streets, they should pay more attention to the Romanian national feelings, and it also admits that the position of one of the vice-presidents of the county council should be occupied by a Romanian.

**The situation in Cluj**

In the Cluj local council there is a large Romanian majority, and the mayor is Romanian, too. Until 2000, the majority of the council supported the mayor's ethnically biased local policy. In the City Hall of Cluj only about 1-2% of the employees are Hungarians, which is a very poor match for the city's 22% Hungarian population. This situation is a consequence of the mayor's conscientious politics: he is the secretary general of the GRP, and one of the major promoters of the ethnocentric discourse at the national level. The mayor and the supporting GRP – as well as PNUM before 1996 – have initiated several actions that offended the ethnic identity of the members of the Hungarian community. The changes initiated by the mayor are part part of a comprehensive strategy, justified by the argument that today's significant Romanian majority has not been adequately reflected by the image of the city center.

Some of the local leaders of DAHR worded the ethnocentric Hungarian discourse most comprehensively. According to them, the topics that lead to tension in the LG's policy are the following:

1. The mayor's actions to forbid the bilingual signs and inscriptions in the city. Though the bilingual plates are permitted by the law, they are not installed, and this fact has contributed to a bad atmosphere in the town.
2. The Hungarian historical monuments are pushed to the background; there are repeated attempts to destroy memorial plaques. In a leading position is in this respect the case of the statue of the Hungarian King Mathias, located in the very center of the city. The mayor tried to humiliate the Hungarian population of the city by displaying on the statue a plaque with an inscription suggesting that the great king was only once defeated in battle when, despite his supposedly Romanian origin, started war against Romanians. The goal of the activities was undoubtedly to stir interethnic tension, and use this as political capital for the benefit of the mayor and his party.
3. The names of streets in Cluj had been Romanianized to a large extent even before 1989, but after 1990 this trend continued, and between 1992-2000 many traditional, especially Hungarian-related street names were changed to Romanian names, particularly in the central part of the town. It has to be admitted though that lately this action has stopped, and in a certain respects minor corrections were operated.
4. In all the public spaces of the town, including parks, the benches are painted in the national colors, thus emphasizing the "Romanian" character of the town, which is humiliating for the Hungarians, because they feel their past and present are being denied.
5. The mayor is unwilling to apply the stipulations of the new law on local public administration, stating that there are less than 20% Hungarians in the town, though the criteria for the application of the law – the data of the 1992 census – would not allow him to do so. He resists having Romanian-Hungarian-German nameplates displayed, despite the decision to this end of the local council.
6. He often makes offending public statements in which he hints at the Hungarians' statute in Romania (and therefore in Cluj), saying they are foreigners, and that they should go to Hungary if they are not satisfied with the local conditions.
7. Hungarian language cannot be used at the marriage registry office either; moreover, in case of informal remarks added in Hungarian the authority makes use of the power it is invested with.

The open Hungarian discourse also points out the presence of these offences, or at least if operators have insisted on the question, the non-ethnocentric representatives of the local minority admit that such cases have occurred indeed, but they regularly add that they do not think they are so significant. In addition, they underline that since 2000, anti-Hungarian actions are not frequent or dominant in the council, and that they can cooperate with most of the Romanian colleagues, those that do not belong to the extremist parties.
The Romanian ethnocentric discourse does not admit any of these accusations, though individually there are differences between the statements. In the case of the street names the open Hungarian and Romanian discourses overlap, and along this line the authorities have started changing street names to the advantage of the Hungarians since 2000. All these offences were also identified at the level of voices of the Hungarian public opinion. It seems undeniable that such policies cause bad feelings and reduce the trust of the Hungarian population in the leaders of the town, and implicitly encourage their emigration to Hungary.

In both towns, the above-described ethnocultural tension worsen the Romanian-Hungarian relations, and this leads to a certain degree of segregation at the level of interpersonal relations. According to a survey carried out in Transylvania in 2000, the Romanians and the Hungarians build their social network out of members of their own ethnic group in a percentage of 90-95 (Veres V, 2001).

**Discriminatory situations generated by local or central governments, as perceived by the public opinion**

With the aid of questionnaires, we examined whether the population perceives any negative discrimination generated by an institution of the central or local government, due to their belonging to a certain group, especially to the ethnic group. All the questions pertaining to discrimination were open questions, so the answers that we obtained were recorded in their narrative forms, and subsequently grouped and coded. In this part, we regarded as discrimination all those cases that the respondents named as such, even if from the sociological or legal perspective they could not be regarded as discrimination.

First of all, we can conclude that according to the local majority, practices of ethnic discrimination is not typical. On the contrary, in the case of a significant proportion of the local and national communities, who live in the middle of a minority that outnumbers it locally, the perception is that they are not discriminated on the basis of ethnic belonging.

In Sfântu Gheorghe, two thirds of the Hungarians feel they have never been discriminated on because of their ethnicity, and most of the remaining one-third (24% of the respondents) considers that they have been discriminated only rarely. The rest (9%) declares that they have often been discriminated. However, if we examine the site where these cases have occurred, we notice that two thirds of the cases happened outside the town and in most of the cases could have hardly related with government institutions. In the town, such cases occurred over ten years ago. In the same town 88% of the Romanian population consider that they have not been disadvantaged due to their ethnicity, 8% think that they have rarely been discriminated, while 4% state that they have often been exposed to discrimination. In all, the Romanians feel more rarely that they are treated differently than those belonging to the local Hungarian majority. The difference is that the Romanians have mentioned cases of discrimination that they have experienced since 1990. In fact, over half of the cases have happened since 2000. (For details see Appendix nr. 5.)

As far as Cluj is concerned, half of the Hungarians who live there have not experienced such cases, 36% of them have rarely been discriminated, and 13% state they have often been exposed to discrimination. According to the respondents 92% of these cases have occurred in Cluj, which is why we believe this is worth dealing with in more detail.

Upon examination of the particular cases that the respondents have mentioned, in which they considered to be personally discriminated, we notice that the negative attributes ('bozgor') are mentioned in both towns, which is in fact not an act of discrimination. The rest of the answers did not manage to name the concrete form of discrimination. About 10% of the respondents mention that in Cluj they were warned not to speak Hungarian, they were not promoted at their workplace, or were discriminated in their studies on account of the fact that they are Hungarians.

Out of the Romanians in Sfântu Gheorghe, somewhat over a quarter of those who felt discriminated have been exposed to this attitude for reasons of the language, about the same percentage have experienced the same for their ethnicity – failing, however, to mention exactly how – 22% were discriminated at their workplace (i.e. they were not promoted) and in other circumstances.

One of our questions referred to the institution or concrete place in which they felt they were discriminated. Only 6% of the Hungarians in Cluj mentioned public institutions of the central government, or an office of the local government. In Sfântu Gheorghe 9% of the Hungarians and 28% of the Romanians named in their answers the local government or the local labor office belonging to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. The rest of the situations of discrimination occurred at the workplace or in public spaces, and in public educational institutions (For details see Figure 4.)
In the case of the Hungarians, in both towns, one third of the cases happened before 1989, two-thirds after 1989, while in the case of the Romanian community 90% of the cases have taken place since 1990. (Figure 5.)

We have also analyzed the frequency of discriminatory events. This is only worth examining in Cluj, given the number of the cases mentioned. Approximately 51% of the victims state that they have experienced discrimination once, twice or three times, 5% remember 5 cases, 12% can recall 5-10 cases, while close to one third state they have experienced discrimination over 10 times, i.e. often.

In the end, we asked specifically whether the LG has taken decisions that had a negative effect on any of the ethnic communities at the local level, the question including an inquiry about the decision itself, as well as about the victimized community. Except for 1-2%, in Sfântu Gheorghe everyone answered the question: 89% state there have been no such decisions, while 10% state there have. 17% of the Romanians did not answer, supposedly they were afraid to do so, 32% state there have not been such decisions, whereas 51% believe there have been decisions with a negative impact. According to 40% of the Hungarian respondents the Romanians were affected by the decision, 6% believe the victims were the Gypsies, and the rest consider that the Hungarians were affected negatively. The Romanian respondents all state that their community has been affected negatively.

In Cluj, 75% of the Hungarians answered that there had been such decisions or actions, while 2% did not answer. 98% of the Hungarian respondents feel that the Hungarians were affected negatively, while a few respondents think that the Jews and the Gypsies were the victims.

Finally, it is worth seeing what are the most frequently mentioned discriminatory decisions.

The Romanians in Sfântu Gheorghe have mentioned the following LG decisions perceived by them as being discriminatory:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decisions, actions in Sfântu Gheorghe</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Street names not reflecting Romanian past</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Language barriers in accessing a job</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Church being sued for the land under the Orthodox cathedral</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Simultaneous translation into Romanian in the council</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The general situation of Romanians in the city</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Use of Hungarian language in public administration</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Others</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The complaints of the Hungarians in Cluj, in the order of their frequency, are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decisions, actions in Cluj</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Town name plates only in Romanian</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Funar's anti-Hungarian behavior</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The excavations in the city center</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Use of Hungarian language according to the law</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Language used in the marriage registry office</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Street names not reflecting Hungarian past</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Others (anti-Roma measures mainly)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A significant part of the respondents from both ethnic communities that are in minority at the local level, but especially most of the Hungarians in Cluj, find that there have been numerous LG decisions that had a negative effect on the equality of chances. If we take a close look at the answers, we can observe that they tie in very well with the issues of ethnocultural tension that can be traced in the discourse of the political elite, which we presented in the first part. Two differences in emphasis need to be underlined, however. The first is that the experiences of the Romanian population in Sfântu Gheorghe, as deductible from the results of the survey, mostly confirm practically the open discourse: few of the respondents have had first-hand experiences of discrimination, and even fewer sustain to have had such experiences in connection with public institutions. The tension is exaggerated by the local Romanian elite, which is also caused and occasionally reinforced by the dominance of the local Hungarian ethnocentric political
Due to that the situation could be improved significantly with little effort. Another good sign is that at least 4% of the Hungarians in Sfântu Gheorghe admit that the Romanians are disadvantaged by some decisions, though this percentage is too small to influence the discourse of the elite.

In Cluj, the population's state of mind, as expressed by the public opinion, about the LG politics is rather fiery, and it ties in with the position of the advocates of ethnocentric discourse. In connection with street names, one can feel the difference between the two types of discourses. Here also we can notice the overlapping between the opinions of the population and of the elite. It would be useful to describe the sociological profile of the population to see who are the people who feel most discriminated. This would be possible by using the data of the survey, but for reasons of size of the paper, we have decided to postpone this exercise for a later phase of the research.

The attitude of the deconcentrated governmental institutions in the evolution of the inter-ethnic relations

In this sub-chapter we will look for an answer to the question in which conditions the central government can improve the local ethnic tensions and conflicts. The answers will be based on the statements of the interviewees, and on the observation of the actions taken by the institutions of the central government. In Romania, as we have seen, the government is represented at the local level by the prefect. The prefect coordinates all the administration of governmental institutions, though there are “inspectorates” that are directly in the suborder of the ministries. What we are setting out to analyze is the role and attitude of the prefecture in handling or preventing ethnic tension. Our starting point is, as Lotte Jensen so aptly worded, that “No actor can reach its goals unilaterally. All politico-administrative actors are – to varying degrees – depending on other actors for a range of resources in order to survive or to achieve the goals expected of them by their constituencies”. (Jensen, L, 2002). Therefore, amidst the modest possibilities provided by the budget, the central government has a series of instruments to force the local governments into a decision, but the question is how the center decides what is ‘good’ in terms of ethnic relations, and what methods it employs to achieve the desired situation.

The central government has a so-called Department of Interethnic Relations (DIR), which, in 2000, was subsumed to the Ministry of Public Information. However, DIR has not dealt with ethnic tensions at the level of local governments, or tensions caused by the activities of LG, or – if it has, it has not done it directly, and not in the settlements that we are investigating. In the management of tense situations, the guiding document is the annual protocol signed by the governing SDP party, and the Hungarian ethnic party, DAHR, that provides parliamentary support in turn for SDP. According to the plan, in each Transylvanian county, where the Hungarian minority represents a significant percentage of the population, the local leaders of the two political organizations are expected to sign this protocol. In spite of that, exactly because of the ethnic tensions that we are analyzing, in Cluj and Covasna counties the protocol could not be signed and is being negotiated since the beginning of the year. Because the situation is radically different in the two cities, we are going to discuss them separately.

In Sfântu Gheorghe, based on the events of the last couple of years, it can be stated that the local representative of the government, the prefect, has not been acting as the ‘negotiator’ in cases of ethnic tension, but rather as an actor who stirred the conflict, or contributed to its unfolding. The present prefect, together with other leaders of the deconcentrated central governments, belongs to the local Romanian community, and this has been the case since 1990. At present, these leaders are members of the same interest group that, prior to 1990, made up the second or third line of the town’s elite. Given the ethnic structure of the town, today they cannot control the local government, this is why they try to affirm their group interests on the level of the central government. According to one of the interviewees, it is a generalized opinion that since the elected (city and county) councils are dominated by Hungarians, the prefecture must undertake to represent the Romanian interests in the region, which means that the prefecture cannot play the political role it is expected to perform.

If we analyze the evolution of the negotiations on the SDP-DAHR protocol, we find that the local actors here are influenced by the representatives of the central government, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Public Administration. The attitude showed by the members of the government appeared indeed impartial and mediating, but in parallel the government chose a quite debatable attitude to mitigate the local tensions: they try to calm down the spirits by providing significant financial support to the local Romanian cultural and religious communities. As a part of this measure, for the 100,000 members' Romanian population of Covasna and Harghita counties, the government set up an orthodox Bishopric, with a sizeable governmental support. It is feared, though, that the representatives of the local Hungarians
will react negatively, and thus the situation will probably not calm down, but rather aggravate. The prefecture has also played a role in delaying the implementation of the minority-related provisions of the Law on Public Administration. For instance, they removed the bilingual signs from the building of the prefecture, which the LG and the local Hungarian press were offended by.

In Cluj the situation is different in that the Romanians outnumber the Hungarians at all levels. Despite this, the representatives of the prefecture try to manage the sources of ethnic tension in town, but not efficiently enough. There are two major lines of action. One is the attempt to reduce the impact of the tension-causing actions of the mayor, by condemning public statements. The other is the attitude displayed during the negotiations meant to foster the signing of the protocol between the local SDP and DAHR. The leading actor in this case was the Minister of Home Affairs, who is also the local president of the SDP. Signing the pact in this case is conditioned on the side of the Hungarian leaders by the factual restitution of an estate that used to belong to one of the Hungarian churches.

As a general conclusion it can be noted that the local representatives of the government were not efficient in either of the lines of actions.

**Conclusions**

Based on the findings reproduced above we can conclude that examples of ethically biased policies, as defined by Kovács (2002), are present in both investigated municipalities, but they show certain differences according to which community is in minority at the national level.

Disproportionate power in defining policy goals and priorities in the local governments of one of the competing ethnic communities is manifest through the symbolic representation in the local public sphere in both cases, which results in certain decisions favoring the locally dominant ethnic group.

Structural arrangements favoring one of the competing ethnic communities have been identified at the level of human resource policies of the investigated municipalities in both some of the centrally and the locally subordinated institutions. It is a general trend that job-candidates belonging to the locally non-dominant community have very limited access to the positions within the city halls and subordinated institutions, in spite of the fact that the level of their education is not below the average of the locally dominant group. The human resource policies can be considered as ethically biased even if there is no evidence of clear-cut discrimination. The minority neurosis is permanently reproduced in both cases due to the monopolization of the symbolic representation in the public sphere and by the maintenance of a relatively high level of ethnocultural tensions. In Sfântu Gheorghe the situation is different from Cluj, because the territorially deconcentrated central administration usually is dominated by ethnic Romanians, and the local council’s power is balanced with this power. But the general diagnosis is valid, because the ethically disproportionate power is present in these two kinds of institutions. The central government gets involved in this competing situation preferentially, because politically and financially they support the local Romanian community’s civil and religious organizations.

So the third element of the ethically biased local policy-making, the biased distribution of public resources, can be considered as demonstrated by the research in the cultural and religious fields and in terms of support offered from the local budgets for NGOs and non-profit organizations. The presence of ethnic bias in contracting services is probable, too, but a subsequent phase of the research would be required in order to provide reliable data on that aspect of the investigated phenomena.

**Recommendations**

In order to gradually eliminate some of the shortcomings of multiethnic coexistence identified by the research and to improve the quality of governance on local level, differentiated approaches would be necessary on behalf of the central government for the different patterns of relationships identified in the two investigated communities.

In the case of Hungarian-Romanian relationships, for which the realities on the local level are powerfully influenced by national level (central) policies, the most efficient way of improving local governance would be probably to elaborate a detailed and far reaching governmental strategy aimed at reducing inter-ethnic tensions, preventing the ongoing reproduction of mutual mistrust and enhancing cooperation on all levels, but with special focus on younger generations.

In addition to that, the minority related legal regulations, which are quite generous in many concerns, need to be further elaborated and diversified, the law enforcement significantly improved.

The central and local mass media could contribute on eliminating or, at least, reducing the influence of ethnocentric approaches with regard to local events. But the professionalism of both, local and central
mass media remains wanting in many places from Romania, and the journalists belong usually to
different political influence spheres, so they cannot be considered independent in this sense.

On the level of LGs concrete policies would be required that could prevent the monopolization of the
symbolic representation in the public sphere by locally dominant communities: policies that would foster
joint interethnic projects (maybe including partners from Hungary), divers forms of co-operation between
educational and cultural institutions belonging to the minority and majority, or NGOs with different
ethnic background. In running programs of that kind it is critically important not to facilitate institutional
or organizational opportunism, and to prevent the linguistic marginalization of minority partners that take
part in similar forms of confidence-building cooperation. Though in theory it would be extremely simple
to generate such programs on local level, experiences of the past twelve years yield sufficient evidence
that success of local confidence-building measures largely depend on national policies.

Notes
1. The influence of National identity on the social network formation, BBU, coord. by Veres, Valer,
financed by RSS Praga
2. Pejorative Romanian term for Hungarians, meaning “countryless”.

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Cluj: Kriterion
Appendix

1. The perception of negative discrimination in everyday life. Answers in percents of the 86 persons (42 %) who felt discriminated because of their ethnic belonging

   Ethnic Hungarians in Cluj:

   - Discriminated in their studies: 9%
   - Not promoted at their workplace: 10%
   - Warned not to speak Hungarian: 13%
   - General disadvantage: 14%
   - Negative attributes ('bozgor', countryless): 17.5%
   - Other situations: 36.5%

2. The perception of the negative discrimination in everyday life. Answers in percents of the 41 persons (24 %) who declared discriminated because of the ethnic belonging

   Ethnic Romanians from Sfântu Gheorghe:

   - Not promoted at their workplace: 22%
   - General disadvantage: 27%
   - Warned not to speak Romanian: 27%
   - Other situations: 24%
3. The place of discrimination

a. Hungarians (N=372):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places of discrimination</th>
<th>Cluj-N</th>
<th>Sf. Gheorghe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No discrimination</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public places</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational inst.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifestations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private life</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. When happened the discrimination? Percentage of cases (of the total no. of discriminations):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hungarians in Cluj</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarians in Sf. Gheorghe</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanians in Sf. Gheorghe</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Frequency of discrimination. Percentage of cases (of the total no. of discriminations):

![Graph showing frequency of discrimination among Hungarians and Romanians in Cluj and Sf. Ghe.](image)