

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0665/09
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to the Commission

Subject: Romanian minority in Eastern Serbia

Recent developments in the relations between the Serbian authorities and the Romanian minority in Eastern Serbia have been noted with more than a little concern. Although Romania is a country in which the Serbian minority has dozens of churches and several monasteries, Serbia only allows Romanians living in Voivodina (and hence not to those in Eastern Serbia) to enjoy religious rights.

In the Timoc region, the Serbian authorities are placing obstacles in the way of Romanians' exercising of their religious rights. More precisely, Boian Alexandrovici, a man who has fought to preserve the Romanian spirit in an area in which Romanians for long had no basic rights, and which they have still not completely acquired, was notified by the local Serbian authorities in Negotin, on 21 January 2009, that he had 15 days to demolish the Romanian Orthodox church erected in Malainiţa, close to Negotin. This was despite the fact that the work on that church, which is the second Romanian church in the Timoc region, started on 8 March 2008, *after* the local authorities had received all the documentation needed for construction to begin. That deadline came after another unimaginable situation had arisen: in September 2008, Boian Alexandrovici, a priest belonging to the Romanian Orthodox Church, was notified by the Serbian Orthodox Church of its decision to defrock him. In other words, this Romanian priest has been thrown out of a Church to which he did not, in any case, belong.

In view of the fact that Serbia is an EU candidate state, can the Commission state whether it will raise this concrete issue of the demolition of the Romanian Orthodox church in Negotin at its bilateral meetings with the Serbian authorities? Could it also indicate what steps it plans to take to ensure respect for the religious rights of the Romanian minority in Eastern Serbia?