

## THE ETHNIC AND CONFESSIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE SOUTH-WEST DEVELOPMENT REGION IN 2011

### STRUCTURA ETNICĂ ȘI CONFESIONALĂ A REGIUNII DE DEZVOLTARE SUD-VEST OLTENIA ÎN 2011

Cristina ȘOȘEA<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The study aims to analyze two essential geodemographic structures for the cultural profile of the South-West Development Region: the ethnic and confessional structure of the population in its five counties: Dolj, Mehedinți, Gorj, Vâlcea and Olt, based on the changes registered by the census of October, 2011. Registering a pronounced demographical decline, with a population in continuous regression in the post-communist period (-0.16% as compared to the total population in 1992), the region still remains a compact and unitary block of Orthodox Romanians.

**Key-words:** 2011 census, ethnic structure, confessional structure, Romanian, Orthodox  
**Cuvinte cheie:** recensământ 2011, structură etnică, structură confesională, român, ortodox

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Historical, political and social-economic conditions generated a relatively homogeneous structure of the South-West development Region. The analysis of the ethnical and religious structure of the population during most of the XX<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the XXI<sup>st</sup> century reveal the preponderance of Romanians and Orthodox denomination (Iordache&Trușcă, 2008).

Hence, from a much more heterogeneous population during the medieval period, characterised by a pluriethnical context, which also triggered the presence of boroughs (Poncea, 1999), there have been significant changes in population dynamics, especially during the post-communist period when most ethnical and religious groups decreased, except for the Roma community and some neo-protestant denominations.

In 2011, South-West development Region registered 10.3% of the total population, a lower demographical density than most of Romania's development regions (71.1 inh./sq km as compared to the national 84.4 inh./sq km) and alongside the NE and S development regions, definitely the highest shares of Romanian and Orthodox population (over 91% and respectively, over 93%) (Table no. 1a, b, also stated by Pop&Niță, 2011).

---

<sup>1</sup> University of Craiova, Faculty of Sciences, Geography Department, cristinavmara@yahoo.com

**Table no. 1. Romania's development regions**  
**a) Basic demographic characteristics in 2011**

Development region	Area		Population		Demographic density [inh./sq km]
	[sq km]	%	[inh.]	%	
NW	34159	14.3	2600132	12.9	76.1
NE	36850	15.5	3302217	16.4	89.6
C	34100	14.3	2360805	11.7	69.2
SE	35762	15.0	2545923	12.7	71.2
S	34453	14.5	3136446	15.6	91.0
SW	29212	12.3	2075642	10.3	71.1
W	32034	13.4	1828313	9.1	57.1
București-Ilfov	1821	0.8	2272163	11.3	1247.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>238391</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>20121641</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>84.4</b>

(Data source: www.insse.ro; processed data)

**b) Main ethnic and religious groups repartition in 2011**

Development region	Population [inh.]	Romanian			Orthodox		
		[inh.]	%	urban [%]	[inh.]	%	urban [%]
NW	2600132	1845796	71.0	53.0	1677509	64.5	50.9
NE	3302217	3042846	92.1	40.5	2789990	84.5	41.7
C	2360805	1445269	61.2	64.0	1416781	60.0	62.3
SE	2545923	2243787	88.1	52.5	2268175	89.1	52.3
S	3136446	2849550	90.9	39.1	2906492	92.7	38.8
SW	2075642	1901330	91.6	45.2	1944134	93.7	45.1
W	1828313	1503512	82.2	61.4	1369768	74.9	61.2
București-Ilfov	2272163	1960778	86.3	90.0	1934155	85.1	89.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20121641</b>	<b>16792868</b>	<b>83.5</b>	<b>53.4</b>	<b>16307004</b>	<b>81.0</b>	<b>53.1</b>

(Data source: www.insse.ro; processed data)

## II. DATA AND METHODS

This study reveals several key aspects of Oltenia's ethnical and denominational population structure, based on the results of the census conducted in October, 2011 at the national level, the data being provided by the National Institute of Statistics. Our research consisted in the collection and processing of the statistica data, subsequently synthesized in tables and cartographical materials.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In contrast to the previous census of 2002, the 2011 census used a method of indirect collection of data from administrative sources, therefore the two demographical structures were evaluated based on the on the total number of declared people and not on the stable population. Added to the generalized demographical decline, this methodological deficiency lead to a much lower percent of Orthodox Romanians as a result of the increasing unknown ethnic identity and number of persons whose religion is unavailable.

### 3.1. The ethnic (national) structure of the population

As concerns the ethnic structure of the South-West Development Region, in 2011 there is available information for 1969,301 persons (out of total of 2075,642 persons), Romanians numbering 1901,330 persons (91.6%), Gypsies (Roma) 63,899 persons (3.1%), followed by 1,124 Serbs (0.05%), 752 Hungarians (0.04%), 478 Czechs (0.02%), 307 Germans (0.01%), 166 Turks (0.01%), 160 Italians (0.01%), 131 Greeks (0.01%) and other ethnic groups represented by 952 Bulgarians, Jews, Ukrainians, Polish etc. (0.05%) (Table no. 2).

**Table no. 2. The evolution of the most representative ethnic groups in the SW Development Region during the post-communist period**

Year	Category	Romanian		Roma		Serbian		Hungarian		Czech	
		[inh.]	%	[inh.]	%	[inh.]	%	[inh.]	%	[inh.]	%
1992	Region	2414836	98.3	36292	1.5	1452	0.1	1911	0.1	990	0.04
	Urban	1059501	43.9	14003	38.6	241	16.6	1520	79.5	378	38.2
	Rural	1355335	56.1	22289	61.4	1211	83.4	391	20.5	612	61.8
2002	Region	2264381	97.2	60265	2.6	1235	0.1	1297	0.1	782	0.03
2011	Region	1901330	91.6	63899	3.1	1124	0.05	752	0.04	478	0.02
	Urban	859299	45.2	27236	42.6	252	22.4	606	80.6	156	32.6
	Rural	1042031	54.8	36663	57.4	872	77.6	146	19.4	322	67.4

(Data source: www.insse.ro; processed data)

**Table no. 3. The evolution of the most representative ethnic groups in the South-West Development Region's counties, during the post-communist period**

Community	Year	DJ		GJ		MH		OT		VL	
		[inh.]	%	[inh.]	%	[inh.]	%	[inh.]	%	[inh.]	%
TOTAL	1992	762142	31.0	401021	16.3	332673	13.5	523291	21.3	438388	17.8
	2002	734231	31.5	387308	16.6	306732	13.2	489274	21.0	413247	17.7
	2011	660544	31.8	341594	16.5	265390	12.8	436400	21.0	371714	17.9
Romanian	1992	742954	97.5	395996	98.7	324363	97.5	517384	98.9	434139	99.0
	2002	701085	95.5	380463	98.2	294829	96.1	479826	98.1	408178	98.8
	2011	594841	90.1	321686	94.2	236908	89.3	400089	91.7	347806	93.6
Roma	1992	18037	2.4	4299	1.1	4992	1.5	5533	1.1	3431	0.8
	2002	31544	4.3	6399	1.7	9230	3.0	9137	1.9	3955	1.0
	2011	29839	4.5	6698	2.0	10919	4.1	9504	2.2	6939	1.9
Serbian	1992	36	0.0	14	0.0	1379	0.4	11	0.0	12	0.0
	2002	37	0.0	9	0.0	1178	0.4	4	0.0	7	0.0
	2011	99	0.0	17	0.0	996	0.4	6	0.0	6	0.0
Hungarian	1992	343	0.0	506	0.1	422	0.1	193	0.0	447	0.1
	2002	297	0.0	281	0.1	270	0.1	117	0.0	332	0.1
	2011	192	0.0	134	0.0	153	0.1	66	0.0	207	0.1
Czech	1992	8	0.0	17	0.0	957	0.3	5	0.0	3	0.0
	2002	4	0.0	6	0.0	770	0.3	1	0.0	1	0.0
	2011	2	0.0	10	0.0	466	0.2	0	0.0	2	0.0
German	1992	300	0.04	85	0.02	391	0.12	64	0.01	218	0.05
	2002	192	0.03	56	0.01	259	0.08	27	0.01	136	0.03
	2011	60	0.01	22	0.01	151	0.06	11	0.00	63	0.02
Turk	1992	18	0.00	7	0.00	59	0.02	10	0.00	8	0.00
	2002	30	0.00	1	0.00	55	0.02	19	0.00	36	0.01
	2011	46	0.01	11	0.00	40	0.02	27	0.01	42	0.01

(Data source: www.insse.ro; processed data)

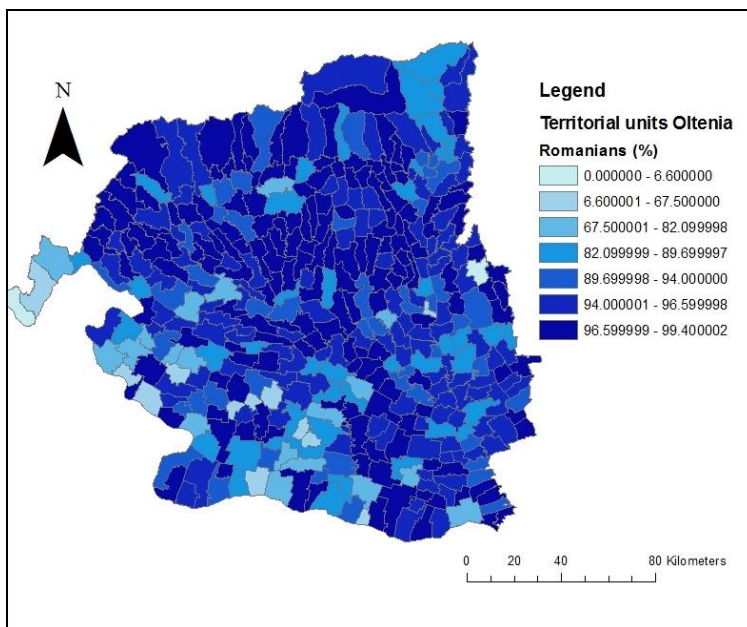
The Romanian population held a percentage of 91.6% (1,901,330 persons) in 2011, which means it registered a lower percentage than in 2002 (97.2%, 2264381 persons) or in 1992 (98.3%, 2414836).

In what concerns the presence of Romanians in the region's counties, Gorj maintains the highest percentage of Romanians in the entire region (94.2 in 2011), while Mehedinți county detains the lowest share (89.3% in 2011) (Table no. 3).

Regarding the presence of Romanians in both habitational environments, most Romanians in the South-West development region live in the rural areas (54.8% in 2011), Mehedinți county (52.9%), Gorj (55.8%), Vâlcea (56.7%), Olt (63.1%), the sole exception being Dolj county (only 48.4% Romanians in the rural).

In Dolj county's urban areas, only two towns hold over 90% Romanians (Filiași, Dăbuleni), four towns detain between 80-90% Romanians (Craiova, Băilești, Calafat, Segarcea), while Bechet has only 59.4% Romanians. The rural settlements having the most compact Romanian ethnic block are: Ghindeni (99%), Giubega (99.1%), Dobrotești (99.2%), Teasc (99.4%), while Catane (52.1%) and Negoii (54.5%) possess the lowest percent of Romanians.

In Gorj county's urban areas, 8 out of 9 towns hold over 90% Romanians (Târgu-Jiu 90.7%, Bumbesci Jiu 92.6%, Novaci 96.6%, Țicleni 96.7%) and Târgu Cărbunești 89.2. 20 out of 60 rural settlements have the most compact Romanian ethnic block: Albeni, Alimpești, Baia de Fier, Brănești, Bumbesci Pitic, Ciuperceni, Crasna, Dănciulești, Dănești, Glogova, Hurezani, Ionești, Jupânești, Mușetești, Negomir, Prigoria, Samarinești, Urdari, Văgiulești (over 98%), while Scoarța possesses the lowest percent of Romanians in Gorj (82.1%) (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1. The spatial distribution of Romanians in the South-West development Region, in 2011**

In Mehedinți county, 2 towns have over 90% Romanians (Drobeta Turnu-Severin 91.4% and Vânju Mare 92.5%) and the other three between 80-90% (Strehaia 80.9%, Baia de Aramă 85.5%, Orșova 86.9%); Cireșu, Ilovăț and Sovarna hold over 98% Romanians, while Svinița possesses only 6.6% Romanians.

In Olt county, only Scornicești holds over 91.4% Romanians, while the other 7 towns possess between 80-90%. Only 5 out of more than 100 rural settlements in Olt have over 98% Romanians, while Grădinari only have 64.5% Romanians.

In Vâlcea, Băile Govora, Băile Olănești and Horezu have over 95% Romanians, while Drăgășani, Brezoi, Călimănești have between 80-90% Romanians. Fârtățești, Măldărești, Păușești and Scundu represent the rural settlements with the highest percent of Romanians (over 98%), while Laloșu only has 77.6% Romanians.

The second largest ethnic group in the South-West development region is *the Roma community* (Gypsy), which increased from 1.5% in 1992 (36,292 persons) to 2.6% in 2002 (60,265 persons) and 3.1% in 2011 (63,899 persons). Out of the national 621573 Gypsies registered in 2011, 10.3% could be found in the South-West development region. The post-communist dynamics demonstrate that this community predominantly lives in the countryside (from 61.4% in 1992 to 57.4 in 2011) and that Dolj county had the highest concentration of Gypsies in the region in 2011 (4.5%), followed by Mehedinți (4.1%), Olt (2.2%), Gorj (2.0%) and Vâlcea (1.9%). Usually, the high rates of Gypsy community associate with low rates of the Romanian community.

Also, its position as a border county, both part of Oltenia and Banat in the past, Mehedinți county possesses a higher ethnical heterogeneousness, with an important number of Hungarians (153 in 2011), Germans (151) and Serbians (996). Another important observation regards the predilection of most minorities for the urban settlements, while the rural settlements in Oltenia are predominantly Romanian.

### **3.2. The confessional structure of the population**

The confessional structure of the South-West development Region in 2011, with 1,967 987 declared persons (out of a total of 2,075 642 persons), was as follows: 93.7% Orthodox (1,944 134), 0.01% Reformed (249), 0.2% Roman-Catholic (3,367), 0.02% Greek-Catholic (440), 0.35% Pentecostal (7,196), 0.15% Baptist (3,172), 0.2% Seventh Day Adventists (4,252). During the entire post-communist period, the Orthodox, Pentecostal and Adventist denominations remain representative in the rural settlements of Oltenia, while the Roman-Catholic and Greek-Catholic denominations numerically prevail in the urban settlements as compared to the rural ones, being directly connected with the minorities they are adopted by (Table no. 4).

As for the spatial distribution in the region's counties, Gorj and Vâlcea hold the highest percent of Orthodox denomination (Table no. 5), as a direct consequence of the important numerical presence of Romanians. Yet, we can definitely notice a superior representation of Orthodox as compared to Romanian population, most probably due to

the ancient appearance and establishment of minorities along centuries, their agglutination in the Romanian community or their massive migration in the years following the Romanian revolution. Once again, Mehedinți county detaches through its important number of Roman-Catholic declared denomination (1358 persons), as a direct consequence of its more diverse ethnical groups.

**Table no. 4. The evolution of the most representative religious denominations in the SW Development Region during the post-communist period**

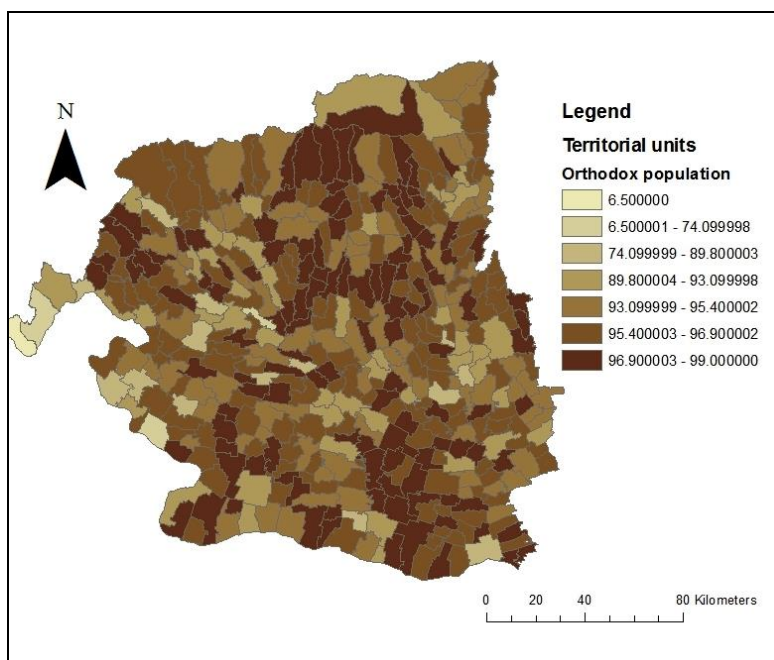
Religion	1992			2002			2011		
	region	urban	rural	region	urban	rural	region	urban	rural
<b>Orthodox [inh.]</b>	2435036	1063729	1371307	2299042	1004457	1294585	1944134	876262	1067872
<b>%</b>	99.1	43.7	56.3	98.6	43.7	56.3	93.7	45.1	54.9
<b>Roman-Catholic [inh.]</b>	6109	4642	1467	5149	4001	1148	3367	2389	978
<b>%</b>	0.2	76	24	0.2	77.7	22.3	0.2	70.9	29.1
<b>Greek-Catholic [inh.]</b>	775	677	98	969	752	217	440	342	98
<b>%</b>	0.03	87.4	12.6	0.04	77.6	22.4	0.02	77.7	22.3
<b>Pentecostal [inh.]</b>	2585	1320	1265	7006	2779	4227	7196	2761	4435
<b>%</b>	0.11	51.1	48.9	0.3	39.7	60.3	0.35	38.4	61.6
<b>Adventist [inh.]</b>	4290	1771	2519	6229	2599	3630	4252	1961	2291
<b>%</b>	0.17	41.3	58.7	0.27	41.7	58.3	0.20	46.1	53.9

(Data source: www.insse.ro, processed data)

**Table no. 5. The evolution of the most representative religious denominations in the South-West Development Region's counties, during the post-communist period**

Community	Year	DJ		GJ		MH		OT		VL	
		[inh.]	%	[inh.]	%	[inh.]	%	[inh.]	%	[inh.]	%
TOTAL	<b>1992</b>	762142	31.0	401021	16.3	332673	13.5	523291	21.3	438388	17.8
	<b>2002</b>	734231	31.5	387308	16.6	306732	13.2	489274	21.0	413247	17.7
	<b>2011</b>	660544	31.8	341594	16.5	265390	12.8	436400	21.0	371714	17.9
Orthodox	<b>1992</b>	754616	99.0	396596	98.9	326851	98.2	521251	99.6	435722	99.4
	<b>2002</b>	721832	98.3	381645	98.5	299529	97.7	486111	99.4	409925	99.2
	<b>2011</b>	619298	93.8	323217	94.6	242609	91.4	407159	93.3	351851	94.7
Roman-Catholic	<b>1992</b>	1503	0.2	1157	0.3	2414	0.7	326	0.1	709	0.2
	<b>2002</b>	1399	0.2	832	0.2	1856	0.6	343	0.1	719	0.2
	<b>2011</b>	652	0.1	687	0.2	1358	0.5	173	0.0	497	0.1
Reformed	<b>1992</b>	132	0.0	210	0.1	105	0.0	52	0.0	131	0.0
	<b>2002</b>	157	0.0	144	0.0	111	0.0	55	0.0	101	0.0
	<b>2011</b>	47	0.0	60	0.0	57	0.0	24	0.0	61	0.0
Greek-Catholic	<b>1992</b>	248	0.03	162	0.04	109	0.03	78	0.01	178	0.04
	<b>2002</b>	364	0.05	136	0.04	215	0.07	102	0.02	152	0.04
	<b>2011</b>	75	0.01	61	0.02	71	0.03	51	0.01	182	0.05
Pentecostal	<b>1992</b>	636	0.08	1162	0.29	471	0.14	94	0.02	222	0.05
	<b>2002</b>	2425	0.33	2199	0.57	1403	0.46	489	0.10	490	0.12
	<b>2011</b>	1867	0.28	2366	0.69	1742	0.66	406	0.09	815	0.22
Adventist	<b>1992</b>	1863	0.24	434	0.11	264	0.08	933	0.18	796	0.18
	<b>2002</b>	2928	0.4	590	0.15	374	0.12	1272	0.26	1065	0.26
	<b>2011</b>	1500	0.23	520	0.15	347	0.13	1003	0.23	882	0.24

(Data source: www.insse.ro; processed data)



**Fig. 2. The distribution of the Orthodox majority in the South-West development Region, in 2011**

The spatial distribution of the Orthodox denomination (Fig. 2) reveals some particular cases: in Șvinița, Mehedinți only 6.5% of the population is Orthodox as a consequence of the fact that only 6.6% of the population is Romanian, Orșova and Baia de Aramă are the urban settlements having the lowest shares of Orthodox population (83.6 and respectively 87.8%), while Dobrotești, Galiciuica and Giubega, Dolj are the rural settlements having the highest shares of Orthodox population.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

The South-West development Region represents one of the most homogeneous regions in Romania regarding the ethnical and confessional structure of its population, due to its geographical position, historical conditionings along the centuries, a low urbanization degree and more recent socio-economic changes, which determined a lasting ethnical and religious inalterability of the population.

#### **REFERENCES**

- CREȚAN R. (2007), *Marginalitate socială și spațială: conceptualizare și tipologie în cazul rromilor din Banat și sudul Crișanei*, Edit. Universității de Vest, Timișoara
- IODACHE COSTELA, TRUȘCĂ LILIANA (2004), *Considerations on the population's confessional structure in the municipality of Craiova*, Analele Universității din Craiova. Seria Geografie, Edit. Universitaria, Craiova, p. 98-106

IORDACHE COSTELA (2008), *Considerații geodemografice asupra județului Vâlcea*, în Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane „C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor”, Nr. IX, Edit. Aius, Craiova, p. 27- 40

IORDACHE COSTELA, TRUȘCĂ LILIANA (2008), *Changes in the ethnic structure of the urban population within Oltenia South-Western Development Region during the 1930-2002 period*, Arhivele Olteniei, Nr. 22, Serie Nouă, Edit. Universitaria, Craiova, p. 501 – 510

PONCEA T.V. (1999), *Geneza orașului medieval românesc extra-carpatic (secolele X-XIV)*, Edit. Biblioteca Bucureștilor, București

POP GR., NIȚĂ A. (2014), *The religious structure of the Romanian population in 2011 by counties and geographical-historical provinces*, Studia UBB Geographia, LIX, Cluj-Napoca, p. 5-24

\*\*\*, (1984), *Geografia României, vol. II, Geografia umană și economică*, Edit. Academiei, București

\*\*\*, (2011), *Recensământul populației și al locuințelor, rezultate definitive, vol. II: Populația stabilă (rezidentă) – Structura etnică și confesională*, <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/>