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Assessing Linguistic Vulnerability and Endangerment in Serbia
A Critical Survey of Methodologies and Outcomes

Abstract: The paper offers a critical survey of vulnerable and endangered languages and linguistic varieties in Serbia presented in three international inventories: UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, Ethnologue and The Catalogue of Endangered Languages. As the inventories differ widely in terms of assessing the exact level of language endangerment and vulnerability, and lack to provide empirical support for their assessment, the paper provides thorough information from official local sources, relevant studies and the authors' own field research, when available, on the language categorized as endangered (Aromanian, Banat Bulgarian, Judezmo, Vojvodina Rusyn, Romani), but also presents additional linguistic varieties which have not been registered yet by any of the mentioned inventories (Megleno-Romanian, Bayash Romanian and Vlach Romanian).

Keywords: sociolinguistics; language vulnerability; language endangerment; language vitality; language documentation; minority languages; Serbia

1. Introduction

Almost half of the languages spoken today around the globe are threatened with extinction. As linguistic diversity is essential to human existence, language endangerment has become a serious concern over the last several decades. Accordingly, sociolinguists have sought to identify factors contributing to language vulnerability and endangerment, which led to the development of global evaluation scales of the state of language vitality. Based on such scales, it is today possible to work toward language documentation, maintenance and revitalization, raise awareness of the need to safeguard the linguistic heritage, and create red books and inventories of endangered languages. These inventories or data-

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bases of the world's languages are invaluable tools which contain an impressive amount of information on thousands of vulnerable or endangered languages, and are already used for several decades by policy-makers, communities and professionals trying to protect linguistic diversity across the globe.

However, when it comes to Serbia, the existing inventories differ widely in terms of assessing the exact level of language endangerment and vulnerability, and often give insufficient or inaccurate data on the varieties spoken in the country, also lacking to provide empirical support for their assessment. Our paper looks into the various factors and sociolinguistic criteria for assessing language vitality, such as intergenerational language transmission, social domains of use, number of speakers, level of literacy, members' attitudes, governmental support, etc., summarizing the most relevant methods and tools developed over the last decades for evaluating language endangerment.[1] Further, we present the international inventories of the world's languages created using these methods and vitality scales, to focus and comment on the endangered languages and linguistic varieties in Serbia included in these inventories. In the second part of the paper, we discuss each of the languages and linguistic varieties in Serbia categorized as endangered by one or more international inventories, and present several other languages or linguistic varieties that might also be considered vulnerable or endangered in Serbia, according to our own field research and linguistic assessment, but have not been included in any of the mentioned inventories. While in several cases our evaluation of the current sociolinguistic status of the linguistic varieties roughly overlaps with that offered by the databases, in others it is rather divergent. As a step towards a more precise assessment, we make use of thorough information coming from official local sources, relevant studies on the topic and our own field research, as well as the applicable legislation of the Republic of Serbia. Finally, we discuss inconsistencies and errors of the international databases, pointing to possible reasons and suggesting possible solutions.

2. How is language endangerment assessed?

Over the past few decades numerous methods and tools for assessing language vitality and endangerment have been developed.[2] This section attempts to summarize the most relevant methods for evaluating language vitality and endangerment, namely *Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale* (GIDS), *Extended Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale* (EGIDS), UNESCO's *Language Vitality*

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[1] It must be mentioned that the paper deals with endangerment from a strictly sociolinguistic perspective, without any implications on the ethnicity of the speakers.

[2] It is noteworthy that the term 'endangerment' puts emphasis on the language loss as a possible outcome of endangerment, while 'vitality' is often used to highlight the affirmative side of the (same) concept.

Index, and *Language Endangerment Index* (LEI), and to present the international inventories of the world's languages and linguistic varieties created using these methods and vitality scales, of which the most important are UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, Ethnologue and The Catalogue of Endangered Languages (ELCat).

The scales summarized below are based on various sociolinguistic criteria. However, the majority of them prioritize the criterion of the *intergenerational language transmission*, which evaluates whether children acquire a variety as their first language at home, departing from the fact that without transmitting a language to younger generations of speakers "a language will cease to exist naturally regardless of other factors" (Lee & van Way 2016, 280).

The *Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale* – GIDS (Fishman 1991) was one of the first scales developed to assess language endangerment. It combines two main criteria – intergenerational language transmission and social domains of language use. GIDS establishes eight levels of endangerment, ranging from the safest languages, placed at level 1, which are fully used by the majority of speakers in all social domains of use (education, media, administration, government at the national level), to the most endangered, placed at level 8, which are spoken only by the oldest generations of speakers and lack any institutional support. The use of languages at levels 1 to 5 varies across social domains and incorporates at least some use of language in the written form, whereas languages at levels 6 to 8 are used only orally and differ regarding the degree of intergenerational transmission: level 6 – the language is used by all generations of speakers and children acquire it as their first language, level 7 – the language is used by the generation of parents and older speakers in their communication, but not transmitted to children, level 8 – the language is used only by some members of the grandparent generation.

Although Fishman's scale is a valuable contribution to sociolinguistics, several shortcomings have been noticed, especially in the domain of language preservation, revitalization and development (Lewis & Simons 2010): a) GIDS focuses on the level of disruption more than on the level of maintenance, which makes it difficult for language revitalizers to strengthen the status of a language; b) GIDS does not adequately account for the directionality of language shift versus language development, which is important when taking concrete measures in changing the status of a language; c) the proposed levels do not describe all possible statuses of a language, so additional levels are necessary; d) GIDS identifies intergenerational language transmission as a single most important factor in language shift and therefore places the locus of revitalization efforts on the individuals in the family surroundings or local community, whereas the role of institutions should also be emphasized; e) the weaker end of GIDS, i.e. the levels which assume the highest degree of transmission disruption, are thought to lack precision and should be more elaborated (Lewis & Simons 2010, 106–107).

Having this in mind, Lewis and Simons developed the *Extended Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale* – EGIDS (Lewis & Simons 2010). In assessing language endangerment, EGIDS departs from the criteria of identity, vehicularity, intergenerational transmission, literacy acquisition, and a societal profile of a generational language use (Lewis & Simons 2010, 117). In comparison to GIDS, additional levels and sublevels are established, reaching a total of 13 levels of language endangerment. Level 0 includes *international* languages, which are used widely between nations, levels from 1 to 5 (*national* (1), *regional* (2), *trade* (3), *educational* (4), *written* (5)) imply the effective use of the language in both oral and written form across various domains, such as education, work, trade and mass media, addressing also the issues of language standardization and institutional support. On the other hand, levels from 6a to 10 assume only oral language use: level 6a (*vigorous*) – the language is used orally by all generations of speakers and transmitted to children as their first language, level 6b (*threatened*) – the language is used by all generations of speakers, but not transmitted to children in all families, which signals that the language is losing its speakers, level 7 (*shifting*) – the generation of parents is using the language among themselves, but not transmitting it to their children, level 8a (*moribund*) – the only active speakers are the generation of grandparents, level 8b (*nearly extinct*) – the only active speakers are the generation of grandparents or older and they do not use the language frequently, level 9 (*dormant*) – the speakers have only symbolic proficiency and the language serves as a remainder of heritage history for an ethnic community, level 10 (*extinct*) – the language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with it (Lewis & Simons 2010, 110–113).

In order to assess the language level on the EGIDS scale, a set of key questions has been developed in a form of a decision tree (cf. Lewis & Simons 2010, 113–117):

#1: What is the current identity function of the language? If historical – the language is evaluated as *extinct* (level 10), if heritage – the language is evaluated as *dormant* (level 9), if home – the question #3 must be further answered, if vehicular – the question #2 must be further answered.

#2: What is the level of official use? If international – the language is evaluated as *international* (level 0), if national – the language is evaluated as *national* (level 1), if regional – the language is evaluated as *regional* (level 2), if not official – the language is evaluated as *trade* (level 3).

#3: Are all parents transmitting the language to their children? If yes – the question #4 must be further answered, and the language will be classified at levels 4, 5 or 6a; if no – the question #5 must be further answered and the language will be classified at levels 6b, 7, 8a or 8b.

#4: What is the literacy status? If institutional – the language is evaluated as *educational* (level 4), if incipient – the language is evaluated as *written* (level 5), if none – the language is evaluated as *vigorous* (level 6a).

#5: What is the youngest generation of proficient speakers? If children – the language is evaluated as *threatened* (level 6b), if parents – the language is evaluated as *shifting* (level 7), if grandparents – the language is evaluated as *moribund* (level 8a), if great grandparents – the language is evaluated as *nearly extinct* (level 8b).

In addition, for those languages whose change is not directed towards language loss but rather revitalization (due to the natural language spread or engineered revitalization efforts), a subset of levels corresponding to levels 6a to 9 has been established: 6a – vigorous, 6b – re-established, 7 – revitalized, 8a – reawakened, 8b – reintroduced, 9 – rediscovered (Lewis/Simons 2010: 117).

UNESCO's group of experts developed a different kind of method for assessing the status of language vitality in the form of guidelines: the *Language Vitality Index* (Brenzinger et al. 2003). UNESCO's method combines 9 factors of equal importance, each rated on a scale from 0 to 5:

1) Intergenerational language transmission: the languages are classified as extinct, critically endangered, severely endangered, definitely endangered, unsafe, or safe;

2) Absolute number of speakers (real numbers should be provided), with an assumption that small speech communities are at higher risk;

3) The proportion of speakers within the total population: the languages are classified as extinct, critically endangered, severely endangered, definitely endangered, unsafe, safe;

4) Trends in existing language domains: extinct, highly limited domain, limited or formal domains, dwindling domains, multilingual parity, universal use;

5) Response to new domains and media: inactive, minimal, coping, receptive, robust/active, dynamic;

6) Materials for language education and literacy, ranging from no orthography available in the community (0) to established orthography, literacy tradition and the use of written language in the domains of education and administration (5);

7) Governmental and institutional language attitudes, and policies, including official status and use: prohibition, forced assimilation, active assimilation, passive assimilation, differentiated support, equal support;

8) Community members' attitudes toward their own language, ranging from "no one cares if the language is lost" to "all members value their language and wish to see it promoted";

9) Amount and quality of documentation: undocumented, inadequate, fragmentary, fair, good, superlative (Brenzinger et al. 2003).

The factors from 1 to 6 should be used together and aim at assessing language vitality. The factors 7 and 8 are developed in the domain of language attitudes and policies, addressing the issue of the type of support required in language revitalization, whereas factor 9 emphasizes the urge for documentation of endangered varieties.

The *Language Endangerment Index – LEI* (Lee & van Way 2016) has been developed for the specific need of the Catalogue of Endangered Languages (ELCat). It is a method for the quantitative assessment of language endangerment, based on four separate factors, but with the possibility to present an overall vitality assessment for a given language, designed in such a way as to allow the overall score to be obtained even if a particular information for certain factors is missing (Lee & van Way 2016, 277–278). Each of the four factors is rated on the scale from 0 to 5. It is worth emphasizing that the estimated level of endangerment may differ among different factors:

1) Intergenerational transmission: *critically endangered* – languages with only a few elderly speakers, *severely endangered* – languages spoken by many of the grandparent generation, but not by younger generations, *endangered* – languages spoken by some adults in the community, but not by children, *threatened* – languages spoken by most adults in the community, but generally not by children, *vulnerable* – spoken by most adults and some children, *safe* – all member of the community, including children, speak the language;

2) Absolute number of speakers: *critically endangered* – languages spoken by 1–9 speakers, *severely endangered* – languages spoken by 10–99 speakers, *endangered* – languages spoken by 100–999 speakers, *threatened* – languages spoken by 1,000–9,999 speakers, *vulnerable* – languages spoken by 10,000–99,999 speakers, and *safe* – languages spoken by ≥ 100,000 speakers.[3]

3) Speaker number trends (whether increasing or decreasing): *critically endangered* – a small percentage of the community speaks the language, and speaker numbers are decreasing very rapidly, *severely endangered* – less than half of the community speaks the language, and speaker numbers are decreasing at an accelerated pace, *endangered* – only about half of community members speak the language, and speaker numbers are decreasing steadily, *threatened* – the majority of community members speak the language, but speaker numbers are gradually decreasing, *vulner-*

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[3] By 'speakers' LEI assumes native speakers, semi-speakers and heritage speakers (Lee & van Way 2016, 279).

able – most members of the community speak the language, but speaker numbers may be slowly decreasing, *safe* – almost all community members speak the language, and speaker numbers are stable or increasing.

4) Domains of use: *critically endangered* – used only in a few very specific domains, such as in ceremonies, songs, prayer, proverbs, or certain limited domestic activities, *severely endangered* – used mainly just in the home and/or with family, and may not be the primary language even in these domains for many community members, *endangered* – used mainly just in the home and/or with family, but remains the primary language of these domains for many community members, *threatened* – used in some non-official domains along with other languages, and remains the primary language used in the home for many community members, *vulnerable* – used in most domains except for official ones, such as government, mass media, education, *safe* – used in most domains, including official ones, such as government, mass media, education.

In order to establish the aggregate score as a percentage, LEI is based on the following formula: Level of endangerment = {[(intergenerational transmission score x 2) + absolute number of speakers score + speaker number trends score + domains of use score]/total possible score based on number of factors used} x 100 (Lee & van Way 2016, 285).

As it can be observed in the formula – the intergenerational transmission is given double weight. The output of the formula establishes the overall endangerment rating derived from the individual factors, and the level of certainty based on the number of factors known and used in the rating. Based on the formula, six discrete levels of endangerment can be determined: critically endangered, severely endangered, endangered, threatened, vulnerable, and safe languages (Lee & van Way 2016, 286).

Based on the aforementioned methods, scales and assessment criteria, several international inventories of the world's languages used today have been created, with their respective levels of endangerment. The most prominent ones are UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (henceforth: UNESCO's Atlas), Ethnologue and The Catalogue of Endangered Languages (ELCat). All these have electronic versions, which are regularly updated, revised and expanded. In what follows we mainly refer to the electronic versions.

The UNESCO's Atlas[4] was developed based on the UNESCO's *Language Vitality Index*, although taking the factor of intergenerational language transmission as the most salient criterion in establishing the level of language endangerment (see Moseley 2010 for the print edition). UNESCO's Atlas distinguishes between six levels of endangerment: *safe languages* are spoken by

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4 Available at: http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/. Accessed: October 25, 2020.

all generations of speakers, without disruption in intergenerational language transmission, *vulnerable languages* are acquired and spoken also by younger generations of speakers, but in a limited domain (they are usually spoken only at home), *definitely endangered languages* are spoken by parent and grandparent generations and they are not acquired as mother tongues at home, *severely endangered languages* include languages spoken by grandparent generation, while the parent generation may understand them, they no longer use it, nor transmit it to their children, *critically endangered languages* are spoken only sporadically in a limited contexts by the oldest generations of speakers, *extinct languages* have no living speakers (Moseley 2010, UNESCO's Atlas).

Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons & Fenning 2013) is an annual reference publication in print and online that provides statistics and other information on the living languages of the world.[5] First issued in 1951, it released its 23rd edition in 2020. Language assessment in Ethnologue is based on the EGIDS scale (Lewis & Simons 2010). The data on the interactive website are presented on a graph combining two criteria: language size and language vitality. Language size represents the estimated number of all users, including both first and second language speakers, and the languages are classified as *large* – if spoken by more than 1,000,000 users, *mid-sized* – if spoken by 10,000 to 1,000,000 users, or *small* – if spoken by less than 10,000 users. Based on language vitality – vitality profile, languages are classified as *institutional* (EGIDS 0–4) if used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community, *stable* (EGIDS 5–6a), if not being sustained by formal institutions, but it is still the norm in the home and community that all children learn and use the language, *endangered* (EGIDS 6b–9) if it is no longer the norm that children learn and use this language, *extinct* (EGIDS 10) if the language has fallen completely out of use and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

The Catalogue of Endangered Languages (ELCat) (Lee & van Way 2016) is the central part of the Google-powered Endangered Languages Project (ELP)[6]. It primarily serves as an online resource for samples and research on endangered languages, encompassing various types of data in the domains of language research and linguistics, language revitalization, language materials, language education, language advocacy and awareness, language culture and art, language and technology, and media, On the interactive language map, the languages are classified as: vitality unknown, safe, at risk, threatened, endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered, awakening, or dormant. Each language is represented with the level of vitality, the number of speakers, the number of available documents and resources, as well as the number and type of available documentation. The basic information is accompanied by description

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[5] Available at: https://www.ethnologue.com/browse/names. Accessed: October 25, 2020.

[6] Available at: http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/. Accessed: October 25, 2020.

of the metadata (e.g. alternative names, language code), the accessible video and audio files documenting the language, reported measures in revitalization and bibliography. In addition, the data on the language available from other databases, such as Ethnologue, World Oral Literature Project or UNESCO's Atlas, are given. In what follows we will refer to ELP.

3. Language endangerment in Serbia in the international inventories

The languages spoken in Serbia have been evaluated in UNESCO's Atlas, Ethnologue and ELP. In this section, we will briefly present and comment on the endangered languages and linguistic varieties in Serbia included in these inventories.

According to the findings from the third edition of UNESCO's Atlas (2010; formerly the *Red Book of Endangered Languages*), there are six endangered languages in Serbia: Aromanian (*definitely endangered*), Banat Bulgarian (*definitely endangered*), Romani (*definitely endangered*), Vojvodina Rusyn (*definitely endangered*), Judezmo (*severely endangered*) and Torlak (*vulnerable*). ELP lists seven endangered languages in Serbia: Aromanian, Balkan Romani, Baltic Romani, Carpathian Romani, Ladino, Sinte Romani, Vlax Romani.[7] Finally, out of the 24 languages Ethnologue (the 23rd edition) registers in Serbia, it does not assess any as being endangered.[8] Only four languages are considered vigorous (EGIDS 6a), while all the others are either developing (EGIDS 5) or institutional (EGIDS 0-4) (Eberhard et al. 2020).

As one can clearly observe, the international inventories differ widely in terms of assessing language endangerment in Serbia as regards which languages and linguistic varieties are included and what is their level of endangerment. While UNESCO's Atlas and ELP seem to agree that Aromanian, Judezmo (Ladino) and Romani are endangered, ELP lists not less than five Romani varieties, of which at least one (Baltic Romani) is for sure not spoken in the country. Banat Bulgarian, on the other hand, considered definitely endangered by UNESCO, is not mentioned in ELP, nor in Ethnologue, while Vojvodina Rusyn, also definitely endangered according to UNESCO's assessment, is listed in Ethnologue with the assessed status 6a (vigorous). Aromanian is again considered definitely endangered by the UNESCO, threatened by ELP and vigorous by Ethnologue.

The inclusion of Torlak, a group of dialects spoken in southern and eastern parts of Serbia, western Bulgaria and northern parts of North Macedonia, among the endangered languages of Serbia, additionally points to the need to reconsider the criteria and make precise definitions regarding the varieties spoken in Serbia. In this respect, it is worth noting that UNESCO's Atlas does not

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7 http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/country/Serbia. Accessed: November 4, 2020.

8 https://www.ethnologue.com/country/RS. Accessed: November 4, 2020.

provide the precise definitions of the terms 'language' and 'dialect', thus provoking the erroneous classification of Torlak as a 'language'.

4. Endangered and vulnerable languages and linguistic varieties in Serbia

In order to understand the current (sociolinguistic) status of each linguistic variety in Serbia, we will first briefly introduce the relevant legislation in the Republic of Serbia, which provides the framework for recognizing a variety as a minority language and further enables its official use in various domains, such as administration, education, culture, and media.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (henceforth: the Charter) was ratified by the Parliament of Serbia and Montenegro in 2005 and came into force in Serbia in 2006.[9] In accordance to the Article 2 of the Charter, in the Republic of Serbia, the particular paragraphs and sub-paragraphs of the articles 8-14 of the Charter are to be applied to the following languages: Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romani, Romanian, Rusyn, Slovak, Ukrainian and Croatian. The articles refer to education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, and trans-frontier exchanges, respectively.

The right to use minority languages is regulated by two main laws: the Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 45/91, 53/93 – other law, 67/93 – other law, 48/94 – other law, 30/10, 101/05 – other law, 47/18 and 48/18 - correction)[10] and the Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities ("Official Journal of the FRY", no. 11/02, "Official Gazette of Serbia and Montenegro", no. 1/03 - the Constitutional Charter and "Official Gazette of RS", no. 72/09 – other law and 97/13 – Decision of the CC and 47/2018)[11]. In addition, according to the Law on Primary education ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 55/2013, 101/2017, 27/2018 – other law and 10/2019)[12], when the language of education is Serbian, national minority students may attend optional classes of the language of the national minority with elements of national culture; exceptionally, bilingual education in the national minority language and Serbian can be organized, as well.

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[9] The Charter is available at: https://ljudskaprava.gov.rs/sh/node/19820. Accessed: October 27, 2020.

[10] Available at: https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_sluzbenoj_upotrebi_jezika_i_pisama.html. Accessed: October 27, 2020.

[11] Available at: https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zastiti_prava_i_sloboda_nacionalnih_manjina.html. Accessed: October 27, 2020.

[12] Available at: https://zuov.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Zakon-o-osnovnom-obrazovanju.pdf. Accessed: October 27, 2020.

The remainder of the section has two parts. In the first one, we discuss each of the languages and linguistic varieties in Serbia categorized as endangered by one or more international inventories, offering thorough information coming from official local sources, relevant studies on the topic and our own field research. While in several cases our evaluation roughly overlaps with that offered by the databases, in others it is rather divergent. The second part of this section presents several languages or language varieties that also meet criteria of inclusion among vulnerable or endangered languages in Serbia, according to our own field research and linguistic assessment, but have not been registered by any of the mentioned international inventories.

4.1. Languages and linguistic varieties in Serbia listed as vulnerable or endangered in the international inventories

Aromanian

Aromanian is an Eastern Romance language, considered by some a historic dialect of the Romanian language, and spoken in the Balkans. It has a similar morphology and syntax with modern Romanian, as well as a large common vocabulary inherited from Latin, but the important source of dissimilarity is that Aromanian has been influenced to a great extent by Greek, Albanian, Macedonian or Bulgarian, with which it has been in close contact throughout its history (Caragiu Marioțeanu 1968; Friedman 2001; Saramandu 2004; Maiden 2016). The presence of Aromanians in Serbia is mainly due to migrations in the 18th and early 19th c. These first comers were bilingual in Greek, while most members of the last wave, in the late 20th century, spoke Macedonian.

UNESCO's Atlas considers Aromanian (with the alternate names Macedo-Romanian, Vlach and Tsintsar) *definitely endangered* in Serbia. The language is also used in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, North Macedonia and Romania, by a total number of 500,000 speakers worldwide (source: Atanasov 2002). Data regarding the number of speakers in Serbia lacks. The only country specific information is that the presence of the language here is due to "immigrant groups deriving from the eighteenth century".

Ethnologue lists Aromanian as *vigorous* (level 6a) in Serbia, with a user population of 13,000, and a total number of speakers worldwide of 191,000. The places with Aromanian language speakers in Serbia are Bor, Braničevo, Pomoravlje, and Zaječar districts.[13] Aromanian is considered *institutional*, but it is not clear in which countries. Regarding the size and vitality, Aromanian is assessed as *mid-sized* and *institutional*.

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[13] https://www.ethnologue.com/language/rup. Accessed: October 25, 2020.

ELP lists Aromanian (Armãneashti, Armãneascã, Armãneshce) among the endangered languages in Serbia, considering it *threatened*, with the observation: "80 percent certain, based on the evidence available", with 350,000 native speakers worldwide (source: Mosely 2005). As far as the speaker number trends are concerned, Aromanian is placed at level 4, with less than half of the community speaking the language and speaker numbers decreasing at an accelerated pace. Transmission is placed at level 1, as "most adults in the community, and some children, are speakers". As for the places where the language is spoken in Serbia, the inventory lists Niš and Kladovo, but fails to provide the number of speakers.[14]

According to recent research, the majority of Serbian citizens of Aromanian descent do not speak Aromanian and adopt a Serbian identity (Kahl 2002; Plasković 2004). Larger Aromanian communities can be found in Belgrade and Niš, and smaller in Knjaževac, Pančevo, Smederevo (Plasković 2004). The members of the community are scattered throughout the country and do not form compact groups anywhere. However, the language is still spoken in Serbia, though by a very small number of people. Kahl's estimate in the beginning of the 21st c. was that "only a small group of migrants from what is now Macedonia declares an Aromanian identity and speaks Aromanian" (Kahl 2002, 161). Nevertheless, a sociolinguistic research conducted in Belgrade between 1994 and 1999, among 261 Aromanians, members of the Serbian-Aromanian association *Lunjina* (founded in 1991) and their families, goes into more detail as far as the use of language is concerned (Plasković 2004). According to the survey, Aromanian is used within the family and community as a communication means by 68% of the respondents, while 6% speak it to some extent. 73% of the older generation speaks the language, the adult – 66%, while the younger – 29%. The tendency of language lost is clear. 31% of the respondents use Aromanian for reading, and only 16% for writing. 66% of the respondents consider Aromanian their mother tongue, while 32% declare Serbian as their mother tongue (Plasković 2004, 152). The author of the research also mentions that there are justified reasons to think that the number of Aromanians in Belgrade is bigger than the 261 who participated in the research. It must be mentioned that the 2002 population census, used by the author, offered a number of 184 Aromanians in Belgrade, and 293 in the entire Serbia (Plasković 2004, 149).

The last, 2011 population census, registers a number of 243 Serbian citizens who identify themselves as ethnic *Cincari*, the ethnonym used in Serbian to refer to this ethnic group (Census 2011), but the number of Aromanian speakers is not mentioned. The estimates, though, put forth a bigger number, which is, however, difficult to establish, due to the well-known mimicry of the people

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[14] http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/963. Accessed: October 25, 2020.

(Nicolau 1993) and the advanced processes of assimilation to the Serbian language and culture (Kahl 2002).

Given the small number of people declaring themselves to be *Cincari*, the Aromanian minority has no political status in Serbia. The language was not recognized as a minority language in the Charter. Legislation does not provide for teaching of Aromanian in schools. However, between 2009 and 2011, Aromanian was taught as a heritage language in Pančevo, close to the capital Belgrade, as part of an open language workshop organized by the NGO In media res. The classes have been taught two hours per week, with most of the students of Aromanian descent, aged between 40 and 60 (Janjić 2011). The Serbian-Aromanian association *Lunjina* has also offered Aromanian language courses once per week between 2014 and 2017, but discontinued it for lack of students and switched to the e-learning platform *Anveatsă armaneashti!* (Learn Aromanian) created in Romania.[15] Based on our personal discussions with *Lunjina* members, there are still several families in Belgrade in which all three generations speak the language.

Banat Bulgarian

Banat Bulgarian is a South Slavic variety used in the Banat region in Serbia, as well as in Romania. The current sociolinguistic situation regarding the variety differs among the two countries, particularly in the domain of function and language use. Banat Bulgarians are the descendants of the Catholic refugees who fled from northern Bulgaria and settled in the Banat region in the 17th and 18th c. in several migratory waves (Vučković 2010, 247; Ivanova & Bečeva 2003).

According to UNESCO's Atlas, Banat Bulgarian is considered *definitely endangered*. The estimated number of speakers is 25,000 (source: Duličenko 2002), although the UNESCO's Atlas signals that the population is "possibly inflated". This linguistic variety is characterized as an outlying dialect of Bulgarian, spoken in Serbia and Romania, more precisely in the Banat region on both sides of the Romanian-Serbian border, with a resettled population in Bulgaria.

Ethnologue does not provide any information on Banat Bulgarian. The data is only given for Bulgarian in Serbia and it clearly excludes Banat Bulgarian, since the area where Bulgarian is said to be spoken is limited to Southeastern Serbia (Pčinja and Pirot districts), with 13,300 speakers (according to 2013 UNSD). The status of Bulgarian is marked as *provincial* (level 2) and *statutory provincial* in the towns of Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Tutin , again clearly not distinguishing Banat Bulgarians. Regarding the size and vitality of Bulgarian, the speakers' population is *large*, and the language is labelled *institutional*.[16] This information is not applicable to the Banat Bulgarian variety.

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[15] http://anveatsaarmaneashti.com/invata-online. Accessed: September 17, 2020.

[16] https://www.ethnologue.com/country/RS/languages. Accessed: November 4, 2020.

ELP does not provide any information on Banat Bulgarian.

In Serbia, Banat Bulgarian is spoken in the Banat region, in the towns of Pančevo, Vršac, Kovin and Zrenjanin, as well as the villages of Belo Blato, Ivanovo, Jaša Tomić, Konak, Skorenovac and Stari Lec. According to Vučković (2009, 3), the unofficial estimates suggest that there are 3,000-4,000 Banat Bulgarians in Serbia, while according to Nomachi (2016, 181) and Sikimić & Nomaći (2016, 11), the estimated number of Banat Bulgarian speakers is 1,000, although the exact figure is difficult to determine as the population censuses do not distinguish between Orthodox and Roman Catholic (Banat) Bulgarians.

The exact number of Banat Bulgarian speakers in Serbia is difficult to establish even based on the official census figures. There is no reference to Banat Bulgarians as an ethnic minority or to Banat Bulgarian speakers in the Serbian 2002 and 2011 population censuses (Census 2002, 2011). In the 2011 Census, 18,543 people declared themselves as Bulgarians (1,075 in the Banat region), while 20,497 did the same in the 2002 Census (1,259 in the Banat region). As for the speakers, the 2011 Census registered 13,337 Bulgarian speakers (429 in the Banat region), while the 2002 Census – 16,459 speakers (768 in the Banat region).[17]

In addition to Banat Bulgarian and Serbian as the majority and dominant language of the country, Banat Bulgarians also speak Hungarian, German and sometimes Slovak (Vučković 2009, 3; Vučković 2010, 248; Sikimić & Nomaći 2016, 11). The Banat Bulgarian variety is not transmitted to the younger generation, according to Sikimić & Nomaći (2016, 11). Furthermore, Banat Bulgarian is rarely used as a spoken language regardless of the prolific literature tradition developed since the middle of the 19th c., which significantly differs from standard Bulgarian as it uses the Latin script (Sikimić & Nomaći 2016, 12). After several periods of decline in the use of Banat Bulgarian (see Nomachi 2016, 183–187), language use has been recently revived, first in the domain of religion and additionally by publications in the local magazine *Ivanovački dobošar* which includes articles printed in Banat Bulgarian (Nomachi 2016, 188; Sikimić & Nomaći 2016, 12). The presence of this variety in the linguistic landscape is scarce: official public inscriptions in Banat Bulgarian exist only in the village of Ivanovo, since only there is the number of declared (Banat) Bulgarians over 15% (Sikimić & Nomaći 2016, 13).

Legislation does not provide for teaching of Banat Bulgarian in schools given the fact that it is not officially recognized as a minority language.[18] However, local people's interest in the linguistic variety is noteworthy. Sikimić & Nomaći (2016, 13) mention a language workshop aimed at teaching the variety

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[17] The censuses register as speakers only those whose first language is the respective variety.

[18] The Charter does not mention Banat Bulgarian, although Bulgarian is listed as a minority language.

to both children and adults, organized for several years (2009–2015), but closed due to financial difficulties. Prior to that, in the period 1997–2000, the local priest taught the variety in the village of Belo Blato for which purpose he wrote a manuscript textbook (Vučković 2010, 261; Ivanova & Bečeva 2003: 358).

Judezmo

Judezmo is the language of Sephardic Jews, a Romance variety which represents a historical descent of (Classical) Spanish. It was originally spoken in the Iberian Peninsula, prior to the expulsion of Sephardic Jews in the 15th c. As the Sephardim spread across the Ottoman Empire, North Africa and some Western European countries, the variety has been influenced by many different languages, such as Spanish, Hebrew, French, Italian, German, Turkish and languages of the Balkans (Vučina Simović 2016; Pons 2019). Given that it sufficiently differs from contemporary Spanish, it represents a second sub-branch of Romance, along with the Balkan Romance group of Eastern Romance (Friedman & Joseph 2014, 4).

UNESCO's Atlas lists Judezmo (also labelled Ladino, Judeo-Spanish, Sephardic, and Haketía in the inventory) as *severely endangered*. The number of speakers in Serbia is not given, but the Atlas refers to a total number of 400,000 speakers of Judezmo. In Greece and elsewhere in the Balkans, the Atlas mentions very few if any Judezmo speakers left. The inventory lists the following countries where Judezmo is used: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Morocco, Romania, Serbia, North Macedonia and Turkey.

Ethnologue does not mention Judezmo in Serbia.

ELP lists *Ladino* as one of the endangered languages in Serbia, providing the following names as alternative in their metadata: Judeo-Spanish, Sephardic, Hakitia, Haketia, Judeo Spanish, Sefardi, Dzhudezmo, Judezmo, Spanyol, Haquetiya.[19] The data for Judezmo in the ELP is actually taken from various other databases and refers to this variety as spoken worldwide. According to the information available from UNESCO's Atlas, Ethnologue and World Oral Literature project, Judezmo is assessed as being *at risk*, all three assessments being "20 precent certain, based on the evidence available". The three databases provide the following numbers of speakers, respectively: 400,000, 110,310, and 110,000. However, the language is also estimated as *severely endangered*, with the estimation being "60 percent certain, based on the evidence available" (source: Salminen 2007). As far as the speaker number trends are concerned, Judezmo is placed at level 4 (*severely endangered*) as "less than half of the community speaks the language, and speaker numbers are decreasing at an accelerated pace". Transmission is placed at level 4 (*severely endangered*), as the language is spoken by

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[19] http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/3444. Accessed: October 25, 2020.

many of the grandparent generation, but not by younger generations. As for the places where the language is used, the inventory lists: Greece, Turkey, Balkans, Morocco, United States.

Establishing an exact number of speakers of Judezmo is a complex task, as the speakers are at least bilingual, not equally competent, and scattered across the world (Pons 2019: 144). According to Pons (2019, 118), there are hardly any speaking communities of Judeo-Spanish left in the world; this applies to Serbia as well. Serbian 2002 and 2011 censuses do not explicitly mention Judezmo, but the speakers (if there were any declared) are probably placed in the category *Other languages*.

In the Balkans, Judeo-Spanish became stigmatized during the disintegration of the Ottoman empire and creation of national states in the late 19th c. and the beginning of the 20th c. As its use was perceived as a marker of unwillingness to integrate into the dominant community, negative attitudes towards the language within the community of its speakers developed (Filipović & Vučina Simović 2008, 309). The process of language shift on the territories of the former Yugoslavia was in a nascent stage between the two World Wars (Vučina Simović & Filipović 2009; Vučina Simović 2016). According to Vučina Simović (2013, 184), although Judeo-Spanish started retreating in favour of Serbian as the official and dominant language as a result of the integration of Sephardim into the majority group in the 19th c., the language was maintained until WWII by the oldest and most conservative members of the community and their families.[20]

The language shift from Judeo-Spanish to Serbian in the Belgrade Sephardic community occurred between 1860s and 1940s (Filipović & Vučina Simović 2008, 313). Despite efforts to slow down the language shift, after the Holocaust the language was completely lost in the territories of the former Yugoslavia (Filipović & Vučina Simović 2008, 315). Only a few Sephardic families in Belgrade maintained the language as a means of communication after WWII, those who came to Belgrade from parts of the Balkans where Judeo-Spanish was better preserved (Vučina Simović 2013, 185). Given their small number, language revival was not possible. According to the Survey *My family* of the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade (1979–1980) (as cited in Vučina Simović 2013, 185–186, ff 94), the informants indicated Serbian or Serbo-Croatian as the only language spoken in their homes at the time of the survey, which clearly indicates the language loss.

There is no study which reports on the transmission of the variety to younger generations in Serbia, but Judezmo is rather placed in a broader sociolinguistic context applicable to all Judeo-Spanish linguistic communities. Re-

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[20] The corpus of Jewish texts published between the two world wars, analysed in Vučina Simović & Mandić (2019) shows that all texts were written in Serbian which suggests that already at the time Serbian represented the dominant language of the Jewish authors.

lying on international research over the past twenty years (e.g. Christodoulos 2008; Romero 2011, 2012; Sarhon 2011), Neda Pons points out that most of the fluent native speakers are bilingual or multilingual, belong to the older generation, whose children's competence is limited, and grandchildren do not speak and do not understand the language (Pons 2019, 144).

It is worth mentioning that the process of revitalization of this variety is gradually taking place worldwide. As of the end of the 20th c., Judezmo started being used in new domains and new media, first and foremost on the Internet.[21] In the context of Serbia, Pons (2019) emphasizes the existence of a cultural-historical portal which encompasses texts written about the Jewish community, history and culture, *El mundo sefarad*, dedicated to the Jews of the former Yugoslavia, with the content written mostly in the languages of the former Yugoslavia. The portal also contains an invitation to learn Ladino.[22]

Vojvodina Rusyn

Rusyn is a glotonym used to refer to the language of Eastern Slavs, spoken in the Carpathian region of north-east Slovakia, south-westernmost Ukraine and adjoining areas of Poland, Romania and Hungary, as well as by the descendants of migrants from this general region to Vojvodina in Serbia (Baptie 2011, 7). The debate whether Rusyn is a separate language or whether the 'Rusyn idioms' are local varieties of Ukrainian is ongoing in contemporary linguistic studies. The concept 'modern Rusyn language' is a recent phenomenon. The varieties of 'modern Rusyn language' differ greatly from the Ukrainian dialects North and South of the Carpathians. Apart from the internal development of the dialect at all levels, the diversity of the variety 'modern Rusyn language' is the result of different language contacts throughout history (Gibson 2016; Danylenko 2016; Magosci 2016; Moser 2016, among others).

According to UNESCO's Atlas, Vojvodina Rusyn is considered *definitely endangered*. It is spoken in Serbia and Croatia, more precisely in the region of Bačka in Vojvodina and the cross-border areas in Croatia. The estimated number of speakers is 30,000 (according to Stegherr 2002, between 30,000 and 35,000).

Ethnologue locates Rusyn (alternative names: Carpathian, Carpatho-Rusyn, Rusynski, Ruthenian) on the territory of South Bačka in Vojvodina, precisely in Ruski Krstur, with an estimated number of 11,300 speakers (source: 2013 UNSD United Nations Statistic Divisions).[23] The status of Rusyn in Serbia is considered *vigorous* (level 6a*), being guaranteed by the Statute of the

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[21] See Pons 2019 for the analysis of the virtual community *Ladinokomunita*.

[22] http://elmundosefarad.wikidot.com/nauci-ladino. Accessed: October 20, 2020.

[23] https://www.ethnologue.com/country/RS/languages. Accessed: November 5, 2020.

Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (articles 6 and 7[24]). Regarding the size and vitality, Rusyn is assessed as *mid-sized* and *stable*, i.e. not being sustained by formal institutions, but still the norm in the home and community that all children learn and use the language.

ELP does not list Rusyn as endangered in Serbia.

The 2011 Serbian population census registered 14,246 Rusyns and 11,340 speakers of Rusyn in Serbia (Census 2011). The data provided by the census show that the great majority of Rusyns, 12,146, inhabit the Bačka region (the West, South and North districts), which is home to 10,398 speakers of Rusyn. The Charter lists Rusyn among the minority languages in Serbia.

The Rusyn language use has a long tradition in Serbia. The Rusyns were colonised on the territory of Bačka (Austro-Hungary at the time) in the mid-18th c., the first schools being founded shortly after that in Ruski Krstur (1753) and Kucura (1765). In the period between the two world wars, the first Rusyn cultural-educational organizations were established and an intense publishing activity started. After WWII (February 1945) the first Rusyn secondary school was founded in Ruski Krstur, and weekly newspapers started being printed the same year. In 1949 the first radio program in Rusyn was broadcast, and in 1975 the Rusyn department of the Novi Sad Television established. In the beginning of the 1970s the Rusyn Language Department at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad was founded.[25] The National Council of the Rusyn National Minority was set up in 2002,[26] and five years later, in 2007, the Cultural Council of Vojvodina Rusyns[27] (Fejsa 2012).

The UNESCO's parameters for assessing language vitality and endangerment were analyzed on the example of Vojvodina Rusyn (Dražović 2018). Thus, as shown, intergenerational language transmission is directly related to the geographical, ethno-demographic and socio-economic factors. In the settlements where Rusyns represent a majority (Ruski Krstur, Đurđevo and Kucura), transmission is continuous and everyday communication in the family and the community takes place in Rusyn. In the regions with smaller number of Rusyns (e.g. Novi Sad) or in settlements outside of Vojvodina region, where Rusyns live in mixed families, the language is spoken by the older and middle generation, while the language is not transmitted to the younger ones. According to Dražović, mixed-marriages and territorial dispersion are two main factors for the disruption of intergenerational language transmission (Dražović, 89-90).

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[24] https://www.skupstinavojvodine.gov.rs/Strana.aspx?s=statut&j=SRL. Accessed: October 25, 2020.

[25] http://www.ff.uns.ac.rs/sr/studijski-programi/osnovne-studije/studijski-programi/rusinski-jezik-i-knjizevnost. Accessed: November 3, 2020.

[26] http://rusini.rs/sr/. Accessed: November 3, 2020.

[27] https://zavod.rs/srb/. Accessed: November 3, 2020.

The education in the Rusyn language is organized at primary and secondary level, depending on the number of students who attend the classes (Dražović 2018, 95). Regular classes in Rusyn from first to eighth grade can be attended in Ruski Krstur, Kucura and Đurđevo. Other places where Rusyns live do not have this option, due to the small number of pupils, but they can opt for optional classes of Rusyn language with elements of national culture (Fejsa 2012). There are textbooks in Rusyn for all levels of education, and the publishing tradition of responsible institutions is long and fruitful, as well as writing and translating into Rusyn (Dražović 2018, 102).

The media of Vojvodina Rusyn exists in printed, electronic and web format in the Rusyn language. The television program is regularly broadcast in Rusyn on the Radio-television Vojvodina 2. The presence of Rusyn on the Internet depends mostly on private initiatives: apart from the website of the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities – National Communities,[28] there are no official websites translated to Rusyn. Rusyn is not sufficiently used on the social networks and content sharing platforms (Dražović 2018, 101). Research on the use of Rusyn on social networks (Mudri 2012-2013), as well as for electronic communication (text messaging),[29] shows the predominant use of Latin over Cyrillic, the official Rusyn script in Serbia, lack of orthographic norms, and the frequent use of English words (Mudri 2012-2013; Fejsa 2013).

According to Dražović, the attitudes of the Rusyn community members towards their mother tongue are positive, as none of the members considers Rusyn as an obstacle in the social and economic development of the community (Dražović 2018, 106). The language is also preserved due to its use in unofficial domains, such as festivals of the Rusyn culture, music and theatre (Dražović 2018, 98).

There is a firm basis for Rusyn language documentation, formed of grammars, orthography textbooks and dictionaries in Rusyn, as well as fruitful and continuous scientific work (Dražović 2018, 107). Given the existence of educational and cultural institutions, it can be inferred that there are conditions of maintaining the vitality of Rusyn. Besides, census data (Census 2011) show that 79.6% Rusyns consider Rusyn their mother tongue.

Romani

Romani is an Indo-Aryan language spoken today in Europe, North and South America, and Australia by at least 3-4 million speakers. Romani linguists dis-

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[28] http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/index.php?lang=6. Accessed: October 23, 2020.

[29] For the data on the use of Rusyn in the SMS communication, the author (Fejsa 2013) uses unpublished research conducted by Helena Papuga and Aleksandra Grbić, presented at a students' conference.

tinguish at least 4 large branches of Romani dialects: North (Northwestern and Northeastern), Central, Vlax, and Balkan, all of which can be further divided into subgroups of dialects and varieties (Matras 2004, 12; see also Elšík & Beníšek 2020 for a more detailed differentiation of 12 Romani dialects). As all Romani speakers are bilingual or multilingual, and their language often stigmatized, Romani has been highly susceptible to the influence of contact languages, at all levels of the linguistic structure (see Friedman 2020; Meyer 2020; Bodnárová & Wiedner 2020, among others).

According to UNESCO's Atlas, Romani (alternate names in the inventory: Sinti, Vlax, Calò) is considered *definitely endangered*. The number of Romani speakers in Serbia is not provided, while the estimated speakers' population worldwide is 3.5 million (source: Matras 2002). It is mainly spoken in East-Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the Balkans.

Ethnologue distinguishes 4 endangered Romani varieties in Serbia and provides the data separately for each of them, namely Balkan Romani,[30] Sinte Romani,[31] Vlax Romani[32] and Romano-Serbian.[33]

Romani, Balkan (alternate names in the inventory: Roma, "Balkan Gypsy" (pej.), including the following dialects: Arli (Arlije, Kosovan Arli), Prizren (Kosovan Romani), Tinners Romani, Bugurdži Romani (Arabadži, Kovački, Rabadži), Pazardžik Kalajdži)) is said to be spoken in the area of Kosovo, with a speakers' population of 101,000 in Serbia (source: 2013 UNSD). Its endangerment is assessed at level 5* (*developing*). Regarding the size and vitality, Balkan Romani is treated as *mid-sized* and *stable*, i.e. not being sustained by formal institutions, but still at home and in the community the norm is that all children learn and use the language.

Romani, Sinte (alternate names in the inventory: Romanes, Sasítka Romá, Sinte, Sinti, including the following dialects: Abbruzzesi, Slovenian-Croatian Romani, Serbian Romani) is registered as spoken in the areas of Belgrade City, Jablanica, Nišava, Pčinja, and Pirot districts and scattered in Kosovo. Its status is assessed as *dispersed* (level 5*). The estimated number of speakers in Serbia is 31,000 (30,000 Serbian, 1,000 Manouche). Regarding the size and vitality, Sinte Romani is treated as *mid-sized* and *institutional*, i.e. developed to the point that it is used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community.

Romani, Vlax (alternate name in the inventory: Rom, including the following dialects: Lovari, Kalderash (Serbian Kalderash), Gurbet (Dzambazi,

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[30] https://www.ethnologue.com/language/rmn. Accessed: November 4, 2020.

[31] https://www.ethnologue.com/language/rmo. Accessed: November 4, 2020.

[32] https://www.ethnologue.com/language/rmy. Accessed: November 4, 2020.

[33] https://www.ethnologue.com/language/rsb. Accessed: November 4, 2020.

Gurbetsky)) is said to be widespread in Serbia. Its status is assessed as *vigorous* (level 6a*). The number of speakers in Serbia is not provided. Regarding size and vitality, Vlax Romani is treated as *mid-sized* and *stable*.

Romano-Serbian (alternate name in the inventory: Tent Gypsy) is said to be spoken in the Srem district in Serbia by 78,000 speakers. Its status is assessed as *vigorous* (level 6a*). Regarding size and vitality, Romano-Serbian is treated as *mid-sized* and *stable*.

ELP mentions 5 Romani varieties as endangered in Serbia, namely Balkan Romani,[34] Baltic Romani,[35] Carpathian Romani,[36] Sinte Romani[37] and Vlax Romani.[38]

For Balkan Romani (alternate names in the inventory: Romany, Gypsy, Cigány, Zigeuner, European Romany, Romani, Balkan), ELP provides information from various databases. According to Ethnologue (2016), this linguistic variety is *at risk*, the assessment being "20 precent certain, based on the evidence available". It is spoken by 611,800 people worldwide, including 101,000 speakers in Serbia (source: 2013 UNSD). According to a previous version of Ethnologue (2009), Balkan Romani is also *at risk*, with a 20% certainty, being spoken by 709,570 people worldwide, including 120,000 speakers in Serbia (100,000 of which are Arlija, 20,000 Dzambazi). According to the World Oral History Project, the status and certainty level are the same as in the previous databases, and the overall number of speakers is 523,900. More precise information can be found on the Balkan Romani variety of Ajios Athanasios spoken in Greece, which is assessed as vulnerable with 80 precent certainty.

The data concerning Baltic Romani is provided for Poland; the data on Carpathian Romani refers to the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The data on Sinte Romani is the same as reported in Ethnologue (2009); the variety is assessed as being *at risk* (with 20 percent certainty, based on the evidence available), with 318,920 speakers worldwide (31,000 in Serbia). The data for Vlax Romani is taken from Ethnologue, as well. The variety is assessed as being *at risk* with 885,970 speakers worldwide. Additional information is provided from Hancock (1995), with the variety being assessed as *safe*.

When it comes to official figures of Romani speakers in Serbia, they increased from 82,242 (Census 2002) to 100,668 speakers (Census 2011).[39] The

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[34] http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/5342. Accessed: October 24, 2020.

[35] http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/5341. Accessed: October 24, 2020.

[36] http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/3263. Accessed: October 24, 2020.

[37] http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/5343. Accessed: October 24, 2020.

[38] http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/5346. Accessed: October 24, 2020.

[39] One of the main reasons why the number of Romani speakers, as well as of people who declared as the Roma, increased between the two censuses is the process of readmission and repatriation of Roma from Western European countries during the first decade of the 21st c.

number of speakers clearly differs from the number of people who declared themselves as Roma (108,193 in the 2002 Census and 147,604 in the 2011 Census). The censuses collect data on Romani without providing information on the exact dialect which Romani speakers use.

As for the legislative framework, Romani is recognized as a minority language by the Charter and the above-mentioned laws are applicable to this language. When it comes to standardization, as Bašić points out, the Romani National Council passed the Resolution on the standardization of the Romani language in 2013 ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 27, March 17, 2014), thus removing a burden in organizing the education in Romani and developing the literary language of the Roma (Bašić 2018, 25). However, according to Lukin Saitović (2018, 32-33) the standardization of Romani in Serbia and the region is an ongoing, long-term process which started during the period of Yugoslavia and resulted in rather divergent processes of language planning in the successor states.[40]

In the domain of education, primary schools with a sufficient number of interested students organize classes of Romani. For this purpose the language textbooks for the students from the first to the fourth grade were published in 2018 by the national Institute for Textbook Publishing and Teaching Aids (authors Rajko Đurić and Ljuan Koko) and their use was approved by the the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities – National Communities.[41] Although there are numerous pupils interested in attending the classes across the country, the main problem is competent teaching staff. As for Romani teaching, a significant step forward was made by creating the department for Romani at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade, which allowed Roma and non-Roma students to learn Romani and obtain certificates necessary for them to be to employed as Romani teachers at schools (Bašić 2018, 24-25). Regrettably, the department closed due to the insufficient number of the Faculty's students interested in Romani

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After signing a series of bilateral agreements with EU countries on readmission, in 2007 the Republic of Serbia passed the Law on the Confirmation the Agreement between the Republic of Serbia and the European Community on the Readmission of Persons Residing without Authorization (*Zakon o potvrđivanju Sporazuma između Republike Srbije i Evropske zajednice o readmisiji lica koja nezakonito borave*). Available at: http://www.mup.gov.rs/wps/wcm/connect/7a5c4001-f14a-4fbf-8e6b-79212c0000e7/Zakon+o+ratifikaciji+Sporazuma+o+readmisiji+lica+koja+nezakonito+borave+izmedu+EU+i+R+Srbije-lat.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mtrtvEb. Accessed: October 22, 2020.

[40] As the relevant books aimed at standardizing Romani, the author mentions the monographs on the Romani grammar, standardization and orthography written by Rajko Đurić (Đurić 2005, 2011, 2012). It is noteworthy that Đurić 2012 has served as a basis for standardization of Romani in Serbia.

[41] The authors of this paper are not familiar if the textbooks are officially used only in Vojvodina or in the other parts of Serbia as well.

(Ćirković 2018, 245). In addition, Romani is being taught at the College for Preschool Education "Mihailo Pavlov" in Vršac (Ćirković 2018, 245). Furthermore, the project *Quality Education in Romani for Europe* (QUALIROM) offers teaching materials in six Romani varieties ranging from proficiency levels A1 to B2 for learners on primary, secondary and tertiary levels and the materials for the Gurbet Romani varieties are provided in Romani, English and Serbian.[42] Important efforts to explore and maintain the culture and language of the Roma in Serbia are taken by the Board for the Study of Life and Customs of Roma of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts.

The inclusion of Romani in the electronic media has only been partly controlled and organized with institutional support, but mostly conducted without a clear plan by various NGOs and private initiatives (Lukin Saitović 2018, 33). In the domain of media worth mentioning is the Radio-television Vojvodina 2 which regularly broadcasts the program in Romani and also releases the news translated into Romani on the website of the Radio-television Vojvodina.[43]

Regardless of the legislation and institutionalization of Romani, the linguistic situation is complicated as several dialects and their varieties are spoken on the territory of Serbia. The existing linguistic literature attests two major groups of dialects on the territory of Serbia, namely Balkan and Vlax, both of which have a major geographical distribution in the Balkans and large numbers of speakers (Matras 2004, 6–8; Elšík & Beníšek 2020, see the work cited in, especially Boretzky 1993, 1994, 1996). Of the South Balkan dialects, the Arli-type of dialects are mentioned in Serbia (Borezky 1996; Elšík & Beníšek 2020, 400), while of the North Balkan, the Drindari-Kalajdži-Bugurdži group is registered in Kosovo (Elšík & Beníšek 2020, 401, see Boretzky 1993 for Bugurdži). Of the South Vlax dialects, Gurbet is said to be spoken in Serbia and other countries of the former Yugoslavia (Elšík & Beníšek 2020, 405, see also Uhlik 1973). Of the North Vlax dialects, Kalderaš is an out-migrant variety spoken in Serbia (Boretzky 1993, 4; Elšík & Beníšek 2020, 405) and Lovari is attested in Vojvodina (Matras 2004, 8).[44]

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[42] The Gurbet material is available at: http://qualirom.uni-graz.at/teaching/8/materials.html. Accessed: November 9, 2020.

[43] Available at: https://www.rtv.rs/rom/. Accessed November 5, 2020.

[44] According to Ćirković, the private collection of Mozes Heinschink archived in the Phonogrammarchiv of the Austrian Academy of Science encompasses audio material recorded in various Romani communities in Serbia, such as Tamara, Ali, Xoraxane, Sinte, Lovari, Gurbet, Kalderaš, Bayash in the cities of Belgrade, Mladenovac, Jagodina, Ćuprija, Novi Sad, Niš, Leskovac, Vranje and Vranjska Banja (Ćirković 2018, 232). The collection is available at: http://catalog.phonogrammarchiv.at/sessions.php?sortieren=&action=auskunft&von=projekte&id_projekte=1&vonBis=0-9&suchbegriff?projekt-id&suchwert=1. Accessed: October 22, 2020.

What makes the situation complex from a sociolinguistic perspective is the fact that it is extremely difficult to establish the exact number of speakers of particular Romani varieties. For instance, the linguistic situation in the area of the town of Knjaževac in Eastern Serbia can serve as an illustration of this complexity. In the area of Knjaževac, it was established that the three Roma groups reside, namely Arli, Gurbet and Lejash; while the latter two speak Gurbet and Lejash varieties, the former one has lost the language and shifted to Serbian (Ćirković & Mirić 2017; Sikimić 2017, 2018). Additionally, due to mixed marriages between the members of the Gurbet and Lejash community and the dominance of the Gurbet variety in the area, Lejash speakers are multilingual in both Romani varieties and Serbian (Ćirković 2018, 239). Moreover, the Gurbet variety in the area is reported as transmitted to the younger generation of speakers, with significant attempts of the local officials towards language maintenance through school classes of Romani as a minority language and language workshops organized by the local library (see more in Mirić 2019).

The vast majority of Romani speakers who have maintained their language are bilingual or multilingual. Romani is typically used within the family and local community, while in the larger community the Roma tend to speak Serbian. Unlike other minority languages spoken in Serbia, Romani has been particularly stigmatized and negative attitudes towards the language and its speakers have been reported both within the local Roma communities and the majority community (Baucal 2012; Jerončić 2016, Mirić 2019). We should also mention that Romani is completely absent in the linguistic landscape of Serbia, as there is no top-down or bottom-up signage in any Romani varieties. These circumstances additionally affect the vitality of Romani and need to be taken into account when assessing its endangerment in Serbia.

4.2. Languages and linguistic varieties not listed as vulnerable or endangered in the international inventories

Apart from the above-discussed languages and linguistic varieties, based on our field research of the last 15 years in Serbia, we estimate that there are at least three more languages and linguistic varieties which have not been included in any inventory of vulnerable languages in Serbia: Megleno-Romanian, Bayash Romanian and Vlach Romanian. The reason behind this is, most probably, exclusive reliance on older or unproven sources and insufficient familiarity with the linguistic reality of the region.

Megleno-Romanian

Megleno-Romanian is an Eastern Romance variety structurally related to Aromanian, Istro-Romanian and Romanian, originally spoken in the area where the Vardar (Axios) River crosses the North Macedonian-Greek border northwest

of Salonika. Megleno-Romanian is viewed by some as a separate Romance language, a dialect of Aromanian, an intermediary between Romanian and Aromanian (Kahl 2014; Maiden 2016), but most often as a dialect of Romanian (Capidan 1925; Atanasov 2002; Saramandu 2004).

Megleno-Romanian is considered *severely endangered* by the UNESCO's Atlas and *threatened* by both Ethnologue[45] and ELP,[46] with a total number of 5,000 speakers, in Greece and North Macedonia. None of the three inventories mention that Megleno-Romanian is also spoken in Serbia.

The presence of Megleno-Romanians in Serbia, namely in Vojvodina, is the result of colonisations made by the Yugoslav Communist Party after the end of WWII. The displacement of population groups from Dalmatia, Lika, Kordun, Bosanska Krajina, Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia was meant to strengthen the South-Slav element present in Vojvodina, where a mainly non-Slavic population was living. Among the Macedonians colonized here there was also a small group of Aromanian and Megleno-Romanian speaking "Vlachs", who went unnoticed in the mass of Macedonian Slavs. Macedonian linguist Petar Atanasov mentions that "at the end of World War II, several Megleno-Romanian families from Huma moved to Gevgelija, and others to Vojvodina, settling in the villages of Jabuka, Kačarevo and Gudurica, where the Germans had left from" (Atanasov 2002, 11).

The exact number of Megleno-Romanians established in Vojvodina is not known, as well as the number of returnees to North Macedonia, as they have never been registered as a separate ethnicity at censuses. Nevertheless, the presence of several families of Megleno-Romanians in the village Gudurica was attested in 2014, together with an assessment of the number of speakers, status of the language and presenting first samples of speech, from two elder interlocutors, whose families arrived there in 1946 (Sorescu-Marinković & Măran 2014). Important to mention, the interlocutors emphasized that Magleno-Romanian was used only within the family and knowledge of the language was kept secret. Two years later, the authors who signalled the presence of Megleno-Romanians in Serbia and the fact that the language was still spoken by the older generation, which however consisted of a handful of individuals, detailed: "Today, there are probably a few tens of Meglen Vlachs in the Serbian Banat and probably the same number in the Romanian part of Banat as well" (Sorescu-Marinković & Măran 2016, 204). On this occasion, the authors also warned that field research in Jabuka, the other village where Megleno-Romanians were colonised, was of utmost importance for documenting this extremely vulnerable variety, on its way to extinction in Serbia (Sorescu-Marinković & Măran 2016, 206).

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[45] https://www.ethnologue.com/language/ruq. Accessed: November 4, 2020.

[46] http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/3382. Accessed: October 25, 2020.

Vlach Romanian

Apart from the Romanian minority living in Vojvodina, (modern) Romanian is mother tongue to two other communities in Serbia: the Vlachs of Eastern Serbia and the Bayash. While the Romanians of Vojvodina speak both standard Romanian, which is acquired in school and used in the media, church and local administration, and the dialectal, non-dominant variety (Flora 1971; Sikimić 2014), the other two communities speak only non-standard varieties (Sikimić 2014; Sikimić & Sorescu-Marinković 2013; Sorescu-Marinković 2011).

UNESCO's Atlas and ELP do not register Vlach Romanian as an endangered variety in Serbia, while *Ethnologue* erroneously mentions that Romanian (*vigorous*) is spoken in Serbia in the "South Bačka district: Timok valley", providing a number of 29,100 speakers, obviously referring to the Romanians in Vojvodina only.

The presence of Vlach Romanians on the Serbian territory is mainly due to spontaneous migrations from North to South of the Danube, in the 18th and 19th c. It is possible that the newcomers encountered and merged with a previous layer of Romanized population, but this theory lacks convincing evidence. Vlach Romanian "has developed independently from Romania Romanian, with which it had, until recently, only occasional and isolated contact" (Huțanu & Sorescu-Marinković 2018a, 241). Due to intense and prolonged contact with Serbian, it is characterized by a relative linguistic distance from standard Romanian. Lexical, grammatical and pragmatic markers clearly differentiate it from the standard variety, while the phonological markers are an indication of its dialectal origin. At the moment, this non-standard Romanian variety seems to be undergoing a process of division through *Ausbau*, which increases even more the distance from the standard variety, which underwent a significant process of modernization in the second half of the 19th c., manifested especially through lexical borrowing from Romance languages, meant to reduce the use of the Slavic vocabulary.

The 2011 Census lists 43,095 speakers of Vlach Romanian, located mainly in Eastern Serbia, which makes 0.59% of the total population of the country, whereas community members give much higher estimates regarding the size of the community and number of speakers, which go up to several hundred thousand. For a long time, the use of Vlach Romanian has been restricted to the family domain, due to the low prestige, both with the ingroup and with the outgroup, feelings of inferiority and significant self-stigmatization of this variety in comparison with the standard variety, but also the lack of rights of speakers and attempts at language assimilation (Huțanu & Sorescu-Marinković 2018a, 240). This, coupled with massive migration to Western European countries taking place in the last five decades and depopulation of the villages which the Vlach Romanians originally inhabited, is also the reason why intergenerational lan-

guage transmission is today seriously affected (Huțanu & Sorescu-Marinković 2015, 207).

Until recently, Vlach Romanian has been an exclusively oral language, with no written tradition. Following an isolated attempt in the 1940s to create a writing system for the variety, there have been no significant endeavours until the beginning of 2000. After this date, several actions aimed at developing orthographies for this non-standardized variety emerged, fuelled by the different ideological orientations of their creators (Huțanu & Sorescu-Marinković 2018b). In 2015, based on one of these orthographic solutions and several recent publications in the variety, the Vlach National Council passed the resolution for standardization of the Vlach language. Nevertheless, the decision has been intensely debated ever since, as the pro-Romanian faction within the fragmented Vlach community strongly opposed it, and has not triggered the expected change in the official status and use of the language. There is still no state-endorsed signage in Vlach Romanian and the language is not used in administration. However, private, bottom-up inscriptions in Vlach Romanian, using different spelling systems, started being recently noticed in the linguistic landscape of Eastern Serbia, which might indicate a change in the status of the variety (Huțanu & Sorescu-Marinković 2016).

As far as education is concerned, in 2013 Vlach Romanian was introduced as an optional subject, Vlach speech with elements of national culture, in a few schools in Eastern Serbia (Manovich 2014; Huțanu & Sorescu-Marinković 2015), following the printing of the first textbooks in this variety. At the same time, several other schools started offering, for the first time in the history of the region, optional classes in standard Romanian.

The online use of Vlach Romanian is timid and scarce, with only a handful of websites offering a partial interface in Vlach Romanian and a few forums where visitors occasionally comment in Vlach Romanian. Nevertheless, lately one can witness an increase in the use of the variety on Facebook and Instagram profiles set up by Vlach Romanians, which are rapidly gaining fans and followers (Sorescu-Marinković & Huțanu 2019, 75).

The inclusion of Vlach Romanian among the endangered linguistic varieties in Serbia was nevertheless attempted by the commission Vanishing Languages and Cultural Heritage (VLACH) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, whose goal is to "document and analyse the vanishing linguistic and cultural diversity throughout the world".[47] One of the priorities of VLACH is to support the dialectological diversity of the Romanian language; the Romanian varieties

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[47] https://www.oeaw.ac.at/vlach/mission. Accessed: October 10, 2020.

included here are: Boyash/Rudar, Timok Romanian/Vlach, Transylvanian Romanian and Moldovan Romanian.[48]

Bayash Romanian

The second Romanian non-standard variety spoken in Serbia, whose status is even more vulnerable than that of Vlach Romanian, is Bayash Romanian. The Bayash, also known as Rudari or Romanian Gypsies, are spread all over Serbia and the Balkans. They originate in the Danubian Principalities of Moldova and Wallachia (nowadays Romania), where they have most probably been slaves until the mid-19th c. After the abolition of slavery, they crossed the Danube and settled along riverbanks, where they could find the soft wood needed to pursue their traditional occupation, wood carving (Sikimić 2005).

Unlike the Vlachs, the Bayash do not form anywhere in Serbia compact communities. Bayash Romanian, the mother tongue of the Bayash, who, even if considered Roma, do not speak Romani, has also developed independently from the standard variety, and has been thoroughly influenced by Serbian, the contact language. Like in the case of Vlach Romanian, lexical, grammatical and pragmatic markers clearly differentiate it from the standard variety, while phonological markers indicate not an internal development, but its dialectal origin – the Muntenia or Transylvania dialects of Romanian.

UNESCO's Atlas and ELP do not register Bayash Romanian as an endangered variety anywhere in Europe. However, Ethnologue lists Bayash among Romanian language dialects, together with Moldavian, Muntenian (Walachian), Transylvanian and Banat, with the mention that "Bayash are Roma whose dialect is based on Banat, but influenced by Balkan Romani and Hungarian".[49] Again, the information offered by Ethnologue is erroneous, as there is no evidence that Bayash Romanian has been influenced by Balkan Romani. The inventory further registers this variety only in Hungary, as Boyash Romanian, a dialect of the Romanian language, which is assessed as level 4, *educational*.

Hungary has indeed emerged as the only country in which a special spelling system was created for Bayash Romanian, based on the orthographic rules of Hungarian, and standardization efforts have been made during the last 15 years (Orsós 2015). Croatia has also witnessed the emergence of different spelling systems and printing of most diverse publications in the Bayash variety (Radosavljević 2020). In Serbia, there is no orthography available in the Bayash community and the variety lives on solely as an oral language, with a highly limited domain of use, within the family and as a secret language (Sorescu-

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[48] https://www.oeaw.ac.at/vlach/projects/basic-projects-2016-2021/romanian-varieties. Accessed: October 10, 2020.

[49] https://www.ethnologue.com/language/ron. Accessed: November 4, 2020.

Marinković 2011, 20). There is great lexical and phonetic variation from settlement to settlement, due to the different dialectal basis and migration routes.

In Serbia so far there is no institutionalized instruction in Bayash Romanian or language planning, and the variety has not gained ground within school, media or administration. After World War II there was an attempt to introduce standard Romanian in the schools attended by Bayash North of the Danube, but they were short lived (Sorescu-Marinković 2011, 26), as were the optional classes in the village of Vajska, Bačka district, started in 2009, but discontinued a few years later.

In spite of the lack of governmental and institutional support for the variety, and the low prestige it has both among the outgroup and the ingroup, the intergenerational transmission seems to be satisfactory. This is probably due to the fact that the Bayash most often live in isolated, ghettoized settlements, and assimilation to the majority population is weak. However, in mixed Romanian-Bayash or Vlach-Bayash settlements, the more prestigious local non-Bayash Romanian variety is taken up especially by younger Bayash (Sikimić and Sorescu-Marinković 2013, 171). Frequent code-switching and code-mixing phenomena are the rule in the speech of the Bayash, and "among those living in a purely Serbian speaking environment, a tendency to lose proficiency in the mother tongue can be observed" (Sorescu-Marinković 2011, 24).

The Bayash have not shown up in official censuses until a decade ago, when the 2011 Serbian population census provided a number of 80 Bayash in the Bačka district (Census 2011). Nevertheless, their real number is much higher, of probably several thousand people, as anthropological and sociolinguistic field research in the beginning in the 21st c. attested that they inhabit more than 150 settlements in Serbia (Sikimić 2005, 10-12).

As mentioned before, the Boyash/Rudar variety of Romanian was included among the Romanian linguistic varieties which need documentation by the VLACH Commission. According to VLACH, "Boyash/Rudari subvarieties are today highly endangered".[50]

5. Critical survey of the international inventories

In this section, we will point to the wide discrepancies between the existing inventories which list endangered languages and linguistic varieties (UNESCO's Atlas, Ethnologue and ELP) and discuss possible reasons. First, we will present the previous scholarship on this matter and continue with an evaluation of the databases departing from the data on the linguistic varieties presented above.

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[50] https://www.oeaw.ac.at/vlach/collections/romanian-varieties/boyash/rudar. Accessed: October 10, 2020.

Even though the assessment provided by the inventories is widely used as a starting point for sociolinguistic research, identifying languages at risk and tailoring policies to maintain, revitalize and safeguard particular varieties, during the last two decades linguists with an expertise in minority languages in Europe voiced doubts with regard to the accuracy of data presented. Romani studies scholars were probably among the most vocal, as, in spite of its relatively high number of speakers, the UNESCO's Atlas considers Romani as definitely endangered. Halwachs (2020) suggested that the UNESCO criteria are applied in this way to Romani as a whole, while as a dispersed language, its vitality should be assessed in relation to individual dialects. Leggio and Matras (2017) suggested that the problem, both with the UNESCO criteria and EGIDS, is that they are characterised by a form of methodological nationalism, as "both indicators assume that a language must conform to the model of the nation-state and thus function in all possible domains through a standard and serve as an ideological rallying point" (Leggio & Matras 2017, 257).

Critical voices have also been heard regarding the assessment of endangered languages in Serbia. Even if the UNESCO's Atlas classifies Banat Bulgarian as definitely endangered, for example, linguists have shown that this data does not distinguish between the language situation in Serbia and Romania. In Serbia, Banat Bulgarian is much more threatened than in Romania, and has to be in fact classified either as severely or critically endangered (Sikimić & Nomaći 2016, 14).

The criticism was not directed only towards the final assessment of particular languages, but also towards the accuracy of the scientific principles applied by the inventories, in spite of their undoubtable value and exhaustiveness. Thus, Ethnologue (the 16/17/18th editions) was criticized for frequently lacking citations and failing to articulate clear propositions of language classification and identification, which is at odds with well-established scientific principles: "From a scientific perspective, there is really only one serious fault with E16/E17/E18, namely, that the source for the information presented is not systematically indicated. Furthermore, the introduction contains a number of items where the description of the principles behind E16/E17/E18 is questionable" (Hammarström 2015, 735).

The divergent data and status of particular languages in the UNESCO's Atlas, Ethnologue and ELP indicate that the factors and criteria for language vitality assessment must be carefully evaluated, in order to determine weaker and stronger factors contributing to the vitality of each language. When it comes to particular languages and linguistic varieties whose vitality has been assessed for Serbia, these inventories require more precision with regard to the following information.

Firstly, the estimated number of speakers often refers to the larger population, not to the estimated population in a particular country, e.g. Serbia. For

instance, UNESCO's estimated numbers of speakers of Aromanian (500,000), Judezmo (400,000) and Romani (3.5 million) refer to the worldwide population, while the estimated numbers for Banat Bulgarian (25,000) and Vojvodina Rusyn (30,000) probably do not distinguish between the speakers in Serbia and Romania in case of Banat Bulgarian or between Serbia and Croatia in case of Vojvodina Rusyn. Even when it comes to the worldwide population, in case of Judezmo, for example, estimates greatly differ from the figure offered by the UNESCO'S Atlas of 400,000 speakers: according to Harris (2011), in 2009 there were only 11,000 speakers of Judezmo in the world (3,000 in the USA, 8,000 in Israel and Turkey). Therefore, at least official census numbers as well as the available data from the (socio)linguistic literature ought to be included in the estimation.

Secondly, the level of endangerment in the inventories typically refers to the worldwide speaking communities, not to that in a particular country. For instance, although Judezmo is treated as severely endangered (UNESCO's Atlas) and endangered (ELP), in Serbia this variety is clearly extinct (Vučina Simović 2016). As for Vojvodina Rusyn, Ethnologue assesses it as *vigorous*, which means that "the language is used orally by all generations of speakers and transmitted to children as their first language". However, Rusyn in Vojvodina is not just an oral language, but a written language as well, used in the domains of education, culture, literature, administration, etc. (Dražović 2018). In the case of Aromanian, its assessment as *institutional* is clearly not applicable to Serbia, as this language is not recognized as a minority language. As for Romani, Ethnologue assesses Sinte Romani as *institutional*; although this might be true for some European countries, the use of this particular Romani variety is not institutionalized in Serbia; what is more, there is no data to attest the use of Sinte Romani in Serbia. Furthermore, the case of Romani in Serbia shows that the vitality of one dialect or variety may vary diatopically to a large extent, as the same dialect may be spoken within the local community and families and transmitted to younger generations in one area, while in other areas it may be subject to language shift or complete loss. In addition, the dominance of a particular variety may be influenced by the mixed-marriages of the members of different Romani communities. An accurately assessed level of endangerment in each country is crucial in order to take adequate measures towards language maintenance and revitalization.

Thirdly, varieties spoken in Serbia are sometimes inaccurately located in the databases. For instance, although Ethnologue offers the most accurate data regarding the number of speakers of Rusyn in Serbia, it also contains several errors. Ruski Krstur is indeed the place (village) with the higher numbers of Rusyn in Serbia, but Ethnologue wrongly locates it in South Bačka, not in West Bačka district. The same is true for Romanian, which is said to be spoken in the

"South Bačka district: Timok valley", which are in fact two different regions of Serbia, one North, the other South of the Danube.

Further imprecisions have been observed as well. Ethnologue provides inaccurate information on Vojvodina Rusyn: the Status of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina guarantees the Rusyns, as national minority, constitutional equality through article 6, not article 7, which refers to encouraging and preserving multilingualism and the languages of national minorities in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

Likewise, even if Ethnologue registers 24 languages in Serbia, on the graph showing the profile of languages in Serbia with respect to their level of vitality, there are only 17 languages presented, of which 7 are considered institutional and 10 stable. Mention is made of the fact that "each individual language that has an entry for Serbia is included in the profile", the horizontal axis representing the estimated level of vitality, and the height of each bar indicating the number of languages that are estimated to be at the given level.[51] The same is true for the graph showing the profile of languages in Serbia with respect to their status of language development versus language endangerment, which again presents only 17 languages.[52]

Besides, dialectal variation is not properly taken into account in the inventories, which most severely affects the assessment of the vitality of Romani varieties in Serbia. UNESCO's Atlas does not distinguish between Romani varieties, offering the number of speakers and the level of endangerment for Romani as a whole. On the other hand, different varieties are listed in the ELP for Serbia, however, the actual data concerning Baltic Romani are provided for Poland, whereas the data on Carpathian Romani refer to the Czech Republic and Slovakia. These two varieties are generally not said to be spoken in Serbia, so it is unknown why the ELP mentions them in Serbia. Dialectal variation must be taken into consideration when assessing the vitality of Romani, as not all varieties are equally endangered throughout Serbia or other countries. Also in the case of Judezmo, the international inventories treat all varieties under the same alternate names, not taking into account diachronic, diatopic or functional differentiation.

The lack of precise definitions of the linguistic terminology in the international inventories and the relationship between a language and a dialect is another issue which deserves careful consideration. The case of Torlak clearly points towards this fact, as it is listed as a "vulnerable language" by UNESCO's Atlas. *Torlak* is a linguonim, frequently used in Western-Europan and Russian literature to refer to a complex of balkanized West South Slavic dialects spoken on the territories of the Eastern and Southern Serbia, westernmost parts of Bul-

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[51] https://www.ethnologue.com/vitality/RS. Accessed: October 10, 2020.

[52] https://www.ethnologue.com/profile/RS. Accessed: October 10, 2020.

garia and northern parts of North Macedonia.[53] Although this linguonim was used in the 20st century by prominent Serbian dialectologists (see Ivić 1991; Brozović & Ivić 1988; Peco 1991), the term *Prizren-Timok dialectal zone* is preferred in the current Serbian dialectological literature to refer to a Serbian part of the Torlak dialect group (Ivić 2009; Miloradović 2019).

Although the UNESCO's Atlas mentions that it follows the elastic concept of the difference between the concepts of 'language' and 'dialect' (Moseley 2010a, 19), the example of "Torlak" shows that the selection of linguistic varieties included in the Atlas must be approached very carefully. Intergenerational transmission is the main criterion the UNESCO's Atlas uses to assess the level of endangerment of a linguistic variety. In the case of "Torlak" as a dialect of Serbian, it is difficult to estimate the degree of transmission from the older to the younger generation, especially taking into account that the relation between the non-standard linguistic varieties spoken in the Prizren-Timok dialectal zone and standard Serbian in Serbia is one of diglossia, not of bilingualism. Factors such as mass-media, education, migration and depopulation, among others, play an important role in switching from dialect to standard language or to one of the transitional varieties (on a scale from dialect to standard language), even among the oldest speakers of the dialect.

Other factors included in the Language Vitality Index are also debatable. For example, it is difficult to estimate the absolute number of speakers of a particular dialect, especially under current circumstances: within one dialect, mainly non-standard, there is an entire scale of transitional varieties which are in opposition, or forming a relation of diglossia with the standard language. Furthermore, it is questionable whether a 'base dialect' still exists today, under the influence of mass-media, schooling and migration, and whether it should be used exclusively to assess its vitality or endangerment. The factor 'proportion of speakers within the total population' is particularly problematic, as in addition to the Prizren-Timok dialects there are also other Serbian dialects which do not form the base of standard language, thus it is not clear which speakers are included in the calculation and to whom they relate to. The situation is similar with other LVI factors (i.e. material for language education and literacy, governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies), which neglect the dominant use of the standard language and its prestigious status.

Finally, as we have shown on the example of Megleno-Romanian, Bayash Romanian and Vlach Romanian in Serbia, the international databases do not provide a comprehensive assessment of all (potentially) endangered linguistic varieties in Serbia, leaving them invisible to a wider sociolinguistic community.

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[53] Additionally, this complex of dialects encompasses some insular South Slavic varieties spoken in Romania and Bulgaria (Belić 1905; Ivić 1985, 2009; Soboljev 1994, 1995; Sobolev 1998).

The inaccuracy and wide differences between these international invento-
ries for language vitality assessment, as far as Serbia is concerned, probably have
several reasons. As it has been highlighted, it is not always clear where the data
regarding a particular language come from, nor what principles of language clas-
sification are used. The differences between the inventories are, definitely, also
due to the partly different criteria used by each of them. However, applying all
the factors encompassed by a specific scale is very demanding and resource con-
suming, which is why they use only a few criteria to assess language endanger-
ment. Which is why, in case of smaller countries, like Serbia, and low-resource
languages, the international databases rely mainly on external contributors and
the available literature in English, which in many cases is insufficient and not
accurate enough. Using only part of the sociolinguistic criteria established for
determining language endangerment will definitely render the results faulty.

Furthermore, in the case of languages with several (larger) communities
of speakers, the assessed level of endangerment might not be applicable to all
communities and may show significant regional variation. The discrepancy be-
tween the assessments of Romani varieties in Serbia according to the three in-
ternational inventories emphasizes the need for a more precise investigation of
Romani as a language and its dialects and varieties spoken in Serbia.

After taking a closer look into the data regarding the endangered lan-
guages and linguistic varieties in Serbia, it seems that the information on a
particular linguistic variety were often copied from the same sources, but also
repeatedly emerging from one version or edition of an inventory to the other
without correcting and refining the data or consulting the figures and estimates
coming from particular countries.

6. Conclusion

As we have said in the beginning, these comprehensive catalogues of the world's
languages are invaluable tools which contain an impressive amount of data on
thousands of vulnerable or endangered languages and linguistic varieties across
the globe. As it is to be expected and almost inevitable in the case projects with
such a broad aim, they encompass, together with extraordinary amounts of in-
formation, a big volume of vagueness, derived from imprecise language defini-
tion, inconsistent or selective application of criteria, varying and sometimes un-
reliable sources, lack of local trustworthy sources. Despite the numerous short-
comings, they are today widely used by sociolinguists and communities, being
the main starting point for language revitalization measures. Even if one has to
pool or compare the results of different databases, as we have done, certain ten-
dencies in language development can be deduced.

However, in case of smaller countries, like Serbia, and low-resource lan-
guages, like most of the endangered languages spoken in the country, the data-

bases can prove particularly inaccurate, and the error margin might be much bigger than otherwise. On the other hand, it is precisely in relatively small countries where it is logistically possible to develop and consistently apply a region-specific tool, which includes relevant sociolinguistic criteria. This, coupled with underlying knowledge of the linguistic reality on the field, could offer a clear picture of the disposition, status and vulnerability of the languages and linguistic varieties in the respective countries. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to work towards forming and financing collaborative teams of local researchers with a good knowledge of the field reality and vulnerable linguistic varieties, who would sample, document and assess the status of all languages and linguistic varieties spoken on a certain territory.

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