

interview \_\_\_\_\_

## H.E. Mr. Ján Gábor

Ambassador of the Slovak Republic in Romania



Your Excellency, how would you describe the current state of affairs between the Republic of Slovakia and Romania? What are the strong points of our relationship and what are the things to be done in order to improve our collaboration even further?

Slovakia and Romania are close partners and historic neighbours. If we look back during the last century there were a couple of situations when our nations stood shoulder to shoulder. In the inter-war period both (Czecho-) Slovakia and Romania were trying hard to contain revisionism in Central Europe. Towards the end of the WWII around 160 thousand Romanian troops were fighting on the territory of Slovakia for the liberty of our nation and 10,358 brave sons of Romanian nation remained there forever - the largest Romanian military cemetery is near the city of Zvolen, situated in the heart of my country. Last year, highlighting the 20th anniversary of the modern Slovak Republic, my President decorated two Romanian citizens - General Dragnea and General Goanță who put their young lives at stake 70 years ago - with the highest state award of Slovakia. Finally, my generation remembers very well that, in August 1968 Romania was the only country in the region that raised voice protesting against the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops into (Czecho)Slovakia in order to crash the democratization process led by our famous Slovak politician Alexander Dubček. We may say that this accumulated experience of several generations of our nations has created a very solid historical memory and trust ... **p.2**

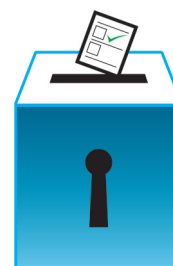
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analysis \_\_\_\_\_

## European Parliament elections 2014: results

The elections for the European Parliament (EP) took place in Romania on May 25, with a turnout of around 32%, which marks an increase as compared to the previous European elections. When looking at the performance of national parties in the European elections, the Coalition made up of PSD, PC and UNPR got around 37% of votes and 16 mandates, while PNL totalled about 15% and 6 seats, followed by PDL, with 12% and 5 seats, independent Mircea Diaconu with 6.8% and 1 mandate, UDMR 6.3% and 2 mandates ... **p.3**



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... between our peoples. Therefore there can be no surprise that Slovakia was the first member state that ratified the entry of Romania into the EU.

A very important link between our countries is the Slovak minority living on the territory of Romania for more than two centuries. Despite the small size of the minority they have been living here for many generations. It is a miracle if we consider that the Slovak nation did not have its own state for very long time. I am deeply convinced that this “miracle” has been possible due to factors such as the internal strength of Romanian Slovaks loving their language and religion and also thanks to the generous approach of the Romanian society that enabled them to create all the necessary conditions in order to preserve their identity of Slovaks - schools, cultural institutions, churches etc. Indeed, minority policy in Romania could serve as a very positive example at least for Central Europe. Maybe it would deserve to be more promoted ...

Romania is also an important trade partner for my country, the volume of our trade exchange is increasing - last year approaching almost 2 billion Euro.

**It is a commonly known fact that Romania is making efforts to become a member of the Schengen area. Would you share with us what was the Slovak approach to this issue and which aspects can be perceived as a liability?**

Slovakia supports Romania’s membership in Schengen, not only because we are allies (see above) but also based on our own experience. Fully implemented freedom of movement for our citizens was the final and real end of the Cold war period.

**Euro zone membership is a yet controversial issue in our part of Europe. Since Slovakia has already adopted euro, could you tell us the advantages, but also the difficulties encountered in the process? What is the impact on the Slovak economy?**

I would not agree that euro as a project is a controversial issue. It is a commitment of every member of the Union to adopt the euro of course after meeting concrete criteria. My

country took very seriously this commitment and we have done our homework. As a matter of fact, Slovakia was the first former communist country - with an experience only with state run economy - joining this project in 2009. We could not envisage the crisis and the rather “controversial” attitude and behaviour of some actors in the Euro zone. No doubt it is the highest level of integration ever achieved in the history of Europe, but it can only work when everybody will observe the principle *pacta sunt servanda*, both big and small countries. The most expensive lesson for us was that is not enough to bear responsibility regarding only your performance, sometimes you are supposed to share responsibility, simply because euro is our common currency. It was very difficult for our elites to explain this aspect to Slovaks after they got through some tough reforms with high social costs. By adopting euro we lost a considerable deal of our sovereignty, but at the same time we became member of a good club. Having in mind the size of my country, the complicated history in our region, our export oriented economy - it was definitely a good choice on the long term. And we should not forget that thousand miles away from Europe businessmen and women would rather know what is the euro than where my country is exactly situated.

**The Visegrad Group is a distinct regional brand recognized as such in Europe. Given its historical background and its members’ ambitions as regards the future, how does the Group react confronted with the Ukrainian crisis? What are the steps already taken and, in this context, what is the Slovak attitude given the conflict evolution?**

The V4 countries have clearly expressed their position on the on-going crisis in Ukraine and we continue to underline the support for our closest Eastern neighbour. Our prime ministers, presidents of parliaments and ministers of foreign affairs adopted declarations denouncing the aggression of Russia and endorsing the territorial integrity of Ukraine. We also activated the Fund of V4 and we doubled the budget for students from Ukraine.

Interview by Mihai Sebe

H.E. Mr. Ján Gábor is Ambassador of the Slovak Republic in Romania since September 2012.

Graduate of Charles University in Prague, Law Faculty and of Diplomatic Academy in Vienna, Austria.

Previously he worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bratislava, serving as a diplomat in Ireland, Cuba, USA etc.

## European Parliament elections 2014: results\*

### Results

The elections for the European Parliament (EP) took place in Romania on May 25, with a turnout of around 32%, which marks an increase as compared to the previous European elections<sup>1</sup>. When looking at the performance of national parties in the European elections, the Coalition made up of PSD, PC and UNPR got around 37% of votes and 16 mandates, while PNL totalled about 15% and 6 seats, followed by PDL, with 12% and 5 seats, independent Mircea Diaconu with 6.8% and 1 mandate, UDMR 6.3% and 2 mandates, PMP (People's Movement Party) 6.2% and 2 seats. Parties such as PNȚCD (Christian Democrat National Peasant Party) barely got 1% of all votes. Following the fragmentation of the centre-right spectrum in late 2013 and early 2014, a rise of the political left was somewhat foreseeable.

However, in terms of seats in the European Parliament, the situation turned out to be much more balanced, as basically all centre-right forces (PNL delegates included, after leaving recently ALDE group) are politically affiliated to the European Popular Party (EPP). Thus, Romanian members of the EPP got 15 seats, while delegates to the Social & Democrats got 16 mandates, only one seat being taken by another group.

### Campaigns, political slogans and what to expect next

As far as the resources invested by the various parties into their campaigns are concerned, it all essentially came down to capitalising on the domestic political and image capital of the most prominent figures. Most of the political parties capitalised heavily on the background and experience of those members who had already made a name for themselves in the national or European fora.

On the centre-right spectrum, the political agenda issues and slogans covered in the campaign included fighting corruption, social and economic integration of the Roma minority<sup>2</sup>, better use of the available funds and pursuing energy independency. The discourse of the centre-left forces was more centred on ways to overcome the economic crisis and fight unemployment, particularly among young people, and on ensuring the full respect and protection of the rights of Romanians as EU citizens, in the recent context of anti-European messages in some member states, calling for limitations to the right of free movement.

Another topic on the agenda was the need to make up for development disparities between Romania and the EU, as well as to reduce social polarization across the country, which still persists, in spite of Romania's steady economic growth of 3.5% last year. The agenda also covered strategies to exit the economic crisis, the development of the labour market with particular focus on integrating young people through entrepreneurship programs for youth and reindustrialization projects across the EU. Yet, several important issues were tackled by all mainstream parties, with various nuances: the economic and financial crisis, unemployment and job creation especially for young people, preserving the funding for the Common Agricultural Policy as a budget priority, accession to Schengen area, European foreign and security policy, with a focus on the European future of the Republic of Moldova. The latter has become a particularly heated topic in the aftermath of the economic sanctions imposed on the Moldovan economy by Russia, as Chișinău was preparing to sign the Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU. Full consensus has been noticed at the level of major parties as regards promoting a European membership prospect for the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and the need to sign the Association Agreements with these two.

Some candidates called for a stronger correlation between the activity of the national legislative and the positions adopted by Romanian MEPs, in an effort to increase democratic legitimacy and transparency.

### Conclusions

This Euro-Parliament campaign is somewhat different from the last one, in what concerns the changing structure and implicitly electoral perspectives for the Romanian centre-right parties, marked by strong fragmentation and competition over the electorate. As regards the political discourse and platforms, compared to the last Euro elections, the recent ones are much more focused on internal rather than on European issues.

Candidates' messages reflect this trend; at the same time, it can be noticed that ideological cleavages between centre-left

\* Parts of this article were previously published in EPIN Paper "Between Apathy and Anger: Challenges to the Union from the 2014 Elections to the European Parliament", ed. Sonia Piedrafita and Anne Lauenroth, 20 May 2014, CEPS, pp. 89- 96, <http://www.ceps.eu/book/between-apaty-and-anger-challenges-union-2014-elections-european-parliament>.

<sup>1</sup> A turnout of around 27.67% in 2009, according to <http://www.results-elections2014.eu/en/country-results-ro-2014.html#table01>.

<sup>2</sup> RADOR bulletin, no 7, May 2014.



and centre-right parties remain rather limited, as the impact of the economic downturn has made both put at the forefront of their political platform the need to fight the negative effects of the crisis, mainly unemployment and the state of economy in general.

More than in the previous European elections, the role of traditional parties in deepening and improving the quality of the political debate and hence of the electoral campaigns remains crucial in order to draw attention whenever the fundamental achievements forming the core of the EU are in danger of being attacked or downplayed by populist movements. What worries most about the rise of these extremist parties is the fact that it happened almost simultaneously in many member states, old ones included, under the disguise of a discontentment with the EU, without however proposing reasonable solutions to the issues raised.

For Romanians, the core European liberties -those pertaining to the Single Market - are the concrete and credible manifestation of the European project in a moment when some parties from states which helped build it question its future in one way or another, for electoral purposes.

Agnes Nicolescu

opinion

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## Learn to be a European - now via Erasmus+ - Guest article -



Erasmus<sup>1</sup>, the new EU programme for education and training (but, now, also youth and sport), emerged harder than its predecessors, following discussions more heated than usual, between the Parliament and the Commission, regarding the new multiannual EU budget. And even so, its very name was in balance until toward the end of the legislative itinerary. But all name variants for the new programme revolved around Erasmus, the 15th-16th century humanist that, in previous programmes, had named the sub-programme on education and training in higher education.

Desiderius Erasmus did not travel really much in Europe, but still considerably so for his time: he was born and spent his youth in Holland, then studied, wrote and taught in France, England, Brabant (in current Belgium), Italy and Switzerland. But the programme bearing his name facilitated study programs in Europe for almost three million students 1987 through to 2013. And so it goes that a current Google search for 'Erasmus' brings forth only on fourth position a link to the Wikipedia article on Desiderius Erasmus himself, with the first three referring to European (and not only) students moving around Europe since before 1987. 'Erasmus' was an almost inevitable choice.

This is because students (but also professors) studying or teaching a semester or two in universities in other countries than their own steadily constructed a European identity, maybe more efficiently and sustainably than the workings of the Euro currency. As Umberto Eco puts it in an interview in *The Guardian*<sup>2</sup>, on 26 January 2012,

*The university exchange programme Erasmus is barely mentioned in the business sections of newspapers, yet Erasmus has created the first generation of young Europeans. I call it a sexual revolution: a young Catalan man meets a Flemish girl - they fall in love, they get married and they become European, as do their children. The Erasmus idea should be compulsory - not just for students, but also for taxi drivers, plumbers and other workers. By this, I mean they need to spend time in other countries within the European Union; they should integrate.*

Eco failed to notice, in newspapers or elsewhere, references to exchange programs in other areas (school, vocational or adult education), although these exist since 1995 in Erasmus+ predecessors: Socrates I and II, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth and Youth in Action, Lifelong Learning. Youth moved around Europe more energetically, involved in youth exchange projects or various opportunities to train in a non-formal or informal context. But school teachers, held back by stringent professional or family obligations, or even reluctance of their own bosses or colleagues (regarding such mobilities as scandalous opportunities for tourism on EU money) moved around rather less - around eight times less!

I wouldn't give you numbers (you've had them in the April edition of the EIR newsletter, from Ms. Monica Calotă, director of the National Agency for Community Programmes in the Area of Education and Vocational Training, an institution managing these programmes since 1997), but it's about tens of thousands of individuals that, in a more consistent manner since 2002, learned, faster or slower, what being a European means: during a training session in an Icelandic school, not even remotely

<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/26/umberto-eco-culture-war-europa>

resembling a Romanian school, located in a village of less than 400 inhabitants in a country where the sun almost never sets; but also during the three-hour-lunch splitting a project meeting in Spain, a country where life usually begins only after the sun sets. Sure, learning in a more non-formal and informal setting - but definitely sustainable. Because in 2014, upon their return in Romania, there is always tremendously much much more for their younger or older learners than sharing photos from Iceland or Spain on Facebook.

Lucian Branea

Lucian Branea is a freelancing designer, manager and evaluator of school, vocational, and adult education projects - with project grants won since 1995 and an evaluator since 1997. A former journalist in printed, radio, TV, and online media (including a substantial period with Radio Free Europe). He has Philology and International Relations degrees from the University of Bucharest.

(<https://www.linkedin.com/in/lucianbranea>)

EIR publication

## Romanian Journal of European Affairs – Summer Issue 2014

In the June issue of the RJE, the contributors bring forward topics concerning the European citizens' initiatives, the democratisation process in the Western Balkans, the Czech debate on the euro (the position of Václav Klaus in the 1999-2002 period), the concept of corporate social responsibility, as well as a book review on EU External Relations Law.

**Oana-Măriuca Petrescu**, PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher within the *European Integration Research Team* - Faculty of Law, University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain, analyses in her article different European citizens' initiatives, as a direct legal link between the European Union citizens and the European institutions. The author provides a general overview of the European

Citizens' Initiative instrument, also trying to analyse briefly certain citizens' initiatives that have been already registered on the European Commission's website, where the online collection of a million signatures is still running, while bearing in mind the important role of the citizens as "co-authors" of the law within the European decision-making process.

**Katerina Veljanovska** and **Oliver Andonov**, Assistant Professors at MIT University in Skopje, Faculty of Security, Criminology and Financial Control, and **Goran Shibakovski**, teaching and research assistant in Social Sciences at the St. Paul the Apostle University in Ohrid, Republic of Macedonia, discuss the democratisation process in the Western Balkans and its connections to the process of state-building before and after the reconstruction. One of the key challenges related



to the democratisation of the Western Balkan countries is resolving the issues with their neighbours. However, political pragmatism and bilateral relations between the countries of the Balkans, including their internal conflicts, do not exclude informal alliances, but as a temporary form of exploitation of the current political and security situation or in order to achieve their own national interests. As a key tool in achieving the national interests, the ethnic minorities in the Balkans cannot be overlooked and most of them are seen as a destabilising factor in the countries in which minorities live. The democratisation of the Western Balkans means that improving the peace and coexistence should be viewed in the current process of cooperation.

**Petr Kaniok** and **Vít Hloušek**, assistant professors at the Department of International Relations and European Studies, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, tackle the issue of the Czech debate on the euro, focusing mostly on the position of Václav Klaus (former Czech president and prominent Eurosceptic) in the 1999-2002 period. Their article tries to identify whether the current critical atmosphere in the EU can be explained through assumptions of theoretically defined soft and hard Euroscepticism and can be thus seen as a manifestation of Euroscepticism.

In her paper, **Maja Savevska**, MSc graduate in Global Governance and Diplomacy at the University of Oxford and PhD candidate at the GEM PhD School, Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorate on Globalization, EU and Multilateralism, deals with the concept

of corporate social responsibility. Since the Lisbon summit, the European Union has become resolute in its intention to promote the uptake of corporate social responsibility among European companies. The recent financial crisis has provided further impetus for evangelising CSR, which is identified by the EU public authorities as one exit strategy from the crisis and a promising means to achieve the Treaty objectives of inclusive and sustainable social market economy. The paper represents a conceptual intervention in the policy justification provided by the European Commission, claiming that CSR does not have a potential to re-embed the economy, as argued by the Commission. The CSR form promoted by the Commission is a microeconomic counterpart to the regime of rule-based macroeconomic depoliticisation.

**Graham Butler**, PhD Fellow at the University of Copenhagen (Denmark), Faculty of Law, the Centre for Comparative and European Constitutional Studies, presented the book *EU*

*External Relations Law: Text, Cases and Materials*, by Bart Van Vooren and Ramses A. Wessel (2014). The book is unique in that it is the first such book in the post-Treaty of Lisbon environment to take a wide-angled look at as many aspects of the growing area as it continues to develop within the legal parameters as set by the Treaties, and it is suitably placed to become the core text for teaching this expanding EU policy field. The authors of the book seek to fill the gap in up-to-date literature from a legal standpoint in the field of external relations of the EU, their analysis offering the reader a comprehensive insight into the world of EU external relations law, and allowing for a thoroughly better understanding of all the issues that are at play.

Full articles are available at <http://rjea.ier.ro>.

**Oana Mocanu**

event

## Romania and Slovakia in the EU: achievements and challenges



On 10 June 2014, the European Institute of Romania organized a conference entitled *Romania and Slovakia in the European Union: achievements and challenges* in partnership with the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Romania. The event was honoured by the presence of Mr. George Ciamba, Secretary of State for European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romania, Mr. Peter Javorčík, Secretary of State for European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Slovak Republic, and Ms. Iulia Deutsch, Deputy Head of the European Commission Representation in Romania. Moderation was provided by Ms. Agnes Nicolescu, Head *a.i.* of Research and Analysis Unit of the European Institute of Romania.

in the deepening of the process, given the eurosceptic movements of some states calling into question the main achievements of the European integration process.

In the opening, **Ms. Agnes Nicolescu** referred to the positive contributions of new member states such as Romania and Slovakia to the evolution of European integration, the economic crisis and the challenges encountered

**Mr. George Ciamba**, Secretary of State for European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pointed out some elements of the professional experience and the profile of the Slovak guest, noting also that the debate marks ten years since the conclusion of negotiations for EU accession by Romania. As EU today is different than ten years ago, countries like Romania managed to record positive economic performance through a strong orientation towards exports and through aligning to European economic parameters. Mr. Ciamba noted the need to shape economic governance at EU level correlated with an energy policy. He detailed the policy areas in which Romania and Slovakia cooperate at European level (negotiation on the multiannual financial framework, the crisis in Europe's eastern neighbourhood, energy and the industrial policy), pointing out that both took advantage of the opportunities created by the EU accession.

**Mr. Peter Javorčík**, Secretary of State for European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Slovak Republic, highlighted the compatibilities of the Slovak and Romanian perspectives in the overwhelming majority of cases of European policies, including the Eastward expansion. For Slovakia, the past 10 years have proven to be years of significant growth, despite difficulties before joining the EU. He pointed out that the accession to Schengen in 2007 and the Eurozone in 2009 played an important role in this development, reiterating at the same time its support for Romania's accession to Schengen. Following the economic and financial crisis, the positive impact of the crisis in Slovakia was the reform of the banking system, despite the difficulties involved. Among the negative aspects there was a drop in GDP, although since 2010 it was on the increase. Structural Funds that contributed to the development of Slovakia are both a challenge for the future and an opportunity in the sense that there is a need to improve their use. In the social and economic context related to the membership to the euro area, the guest believes that for most people joining was a good thing, proving a strong attachment to the EU project. However, he noted the so-called "Slovak paradox" - the fact that despite strong support for EU membership, the country had the lowest rate of participation in European Parliament elections in May this year. The guest also mentioned some of the challenges that Slovakia will have to address in the coming years: supporting small and medium enterprises, reducing excessive administrative barriers

for business, preparing to take over the EU Council Presidency in 2016, strengthening administrative capacity related to the management of the European funds and increasing participation in EU research and innovation programs.

**Ms. Iulia Deutsch**, Deputy Head of the European Commission Representation in Romania, brought up the changes Europe went through in recent years, compared to the moment of the great 2004 enlargement. These developments require open debate of the results obtained so far and the new challenges. It is important to counter populism by highlighting achievements and obvious benefits. Beyond the fact that the EU is the most successful peace project in the world, this achievement must be proven invariably given that peace is not guaranteed permanently, as evidenced by the current crisis in the Eastern neighbourhood. EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007 had strong positive economic effects: the number of jobs increased, trade between old and new member states has tripled, being associated with freedom of movement, and led to economic growth. Economic growth in the new member states has contributed to growth in former EU-15 states, new investment opportunities emerged, financial markets expanded substantially while the single European market grew. EU-12 states were able to recover the losses, which leads to the conclusion that Europe seems to have emerged strengthened from the crisis.

The conference concluded with a brief session of questions related to cooperation between Romania and Slovakia in economic and political areas, which gave the opportunity to Secretary of State Ciamba and Secretary of State Javorčík to sum up a number of issues on trade between the two countries and political cooperation in the EU, including the support for the external dimension of the Union and the Eastern Partnership in particular.

EIR Studies and Analyses Unit

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## The impact of the liberalisation of electricity and gas markets on the Romanian economy

The European Institute of Romania (EIR) organized on 12 June 2014 a debate on *The impact of the liberalisation of electricity and gas markets on the Romanian economy*, part of the campaign for promoting and disseminating the results of the research project Strategy and Policy Studies (SPOS) 2013. The event benefited from the participation of Mrs. Elena Popescu, Director General, Department of Energy, Ministry of Economy, Mr. Bogdan Badea, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the team of authors coordinated by Mr. Aureliu Leca, PhD Prof., Politehnica University of Bucharest, Mr. Cristian Pârvan, General Secretary, Romanian Businessmen's Association (AOAR) and Mrs. Gabriela Drăgan, Director General, EIR.

The event was attended by members of the research team, representatives of the beneficiary institutions and representatives of the diplomatic, academic and research institutions, civil society, media etc.

Mr. **Balazs Barabas** outlined the framework of the debate, by presenting the liberalisation process of the Romanian electricity and gas markets.

Mrs. **Gabriela Drăgan**, EIR's Director General, mentioned the research themes of the Strategy and Policy Studies (SPOS) 2013. Thanking the prestigious team of authors for their economic, technical and political analysis, Mrs. Drăgan pointed out the study's main coordinates. The paper concerns the impact of gradual elimination of regulated tariffs, according to Romania's previously assumed commitments within European and international institutions.

Mrs. **Elena Popescu**, Director General of the Department of Energy, Ministry of Economy, highlighted the institutional perspective of the liberalization process, reiterating the weaknesses identified by the study, as well as the steps required, namely investments in the energy system, re-

balancing the energy sources through renewable energy, and network interconnection.

Mr. **Bogdan Badea**, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, presented the European regulations framework which targets a gradual improvement of the situation, with a focus on the most recent documents, the European Commission's Communication of February 2014 regarding EU's energy and climate goals for 2030 and the Energy Security Strategy of 28 May 2014. The new framework regarding energy and climate changes for 2030 requires reducing EU domestic greenhouse gas emissions by 40%, providing a share of renewable energy of at least 27% at the level of the entire EU and increasing the energy efficiency. The Energy Security Strategy, as a Commission proposal, requires a unitary vision regarding the foreign energy policy, based on an integrated and functional internal market, strengthening the emergency and solidarity mechanisms, increasing energy production in the European Union and moderating the energy demand.

Mr. **Aureliu Leca**, the coordinator of the authors' team, made an in-depth presentation of the study entitled "The gradual liberalisation of the electricity and gas markets and the impact of this process on the Romanian economy". The objectives set included understanding the liberalization process of the electricity and gas markets, identifying the risks and challenges and formulating recommendations. The speaker mentioned the main elements of the analyses, highlighting Romania's economical and social context, the provisions of the Third Energy Package, the liberalization calendar, the most affected economic sectors, the National Efficiency Programme and the social effects of the process. Mr. Leca also underlined several conclusions and recommendations of the authors, among which the improvement of the institutional framework, through a National Institute of Strategic Planning and a national energy strategy.



level, there is a lack of unity regarding the points of view, while economic interests are prevailing

Mr. **Virgil Muşatescu**, PhD Professor, Politehnica University of Bucharest and member of the research team, outlined the need to find solutions for the vulnerable consumers. Thus, the liberalisation of energy and gas prices in Romania will force the government to rethink its welfare system, in order to include special provisions for the social protection of vulnerable consumers. The main proposed solutions recommend: to optimize the vulnerable consumers' use of energy, to review the heat supply systems and to develop methodologies for an accurate assessment of energy poverty and proper sizing of the welfare needs.

Mrs. **Eugenia Guşilov**, Managing Director, Romania Energy Centre, highlighted the problem of the industrial sectors that will be affected by the liberalization, which will happen in an asymmetric manner, depending on the consumption, investments etc. This matter also involves inherited problems, such as the size of Romania's industrial sector prior to '89 and the implications of the transition to a market based economy. The main industrial sectors affected are: steel, fertilizer, construction, aluminium, automotive and cement industries.

According to Mr. **Victor Ionescu**, Director General of OPCOM S.A. and member of the research team, the study's major goal is to identify the potential risks that the transposition of the legislative package could incur. The solutions mentioned include expanding stock trading to electricity trading operations, which would lead to lower costs, especially because the Romanian stock market has all the elements of the European stock markets as well as the separation of property regime between energy distributors and suppliers by introducing a distinct trader license.

Mr. **Cristian Pârvan**, General Secretary, Romanian Businessmen's Association (AOAR), highlighted the weaknesses of the energy regulating institutional system and the lack of vision in achieving a single energy market. Other weaknesses include the lack of transparency and efficiency of the institutions in charge. In Mr. Pârvan's opinion, liberalisation is a political price. At European

**EIR Studies and Analyses Unit,**  
**Adrian Sandu, Communication intern**

projects

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## EIR is the Eurofound correspondent for Romania

The European Institute of Romania aims to support the formulation and implementation of government policies resulting from Romania's status of Member State of the European Union. In this respect, according to the binding responsibilities, EIR conducts studies, analyses and points of view concerning the activities in the field of European affairs, being able to establish partnerships, cooperation agreements and contracts with other public or private institutions and/or national or foreign specialists, according to the law. Within this framework, the EIR has formulated tenders in reply to various calls of European institutions, completed, among others, by the awarding of the *Eurofound Project No 140101: Network of correspondents - Romania*.

*The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)* is a tripartite EU agency whose role is to provide information on work policies and other related social policies. The guidance of its activities during 2013-2016 is ensured by its programme entitled *From Crisis to Recovery: Policies to create a more informed and equitable competitive Europe*. As part of a network of correspondents, EIR will help achieve the objectives of the Foundation, by providing research and information services for Eurofound, which will contribute to the European Observatory for Industrial Relations and Working Conditions, European Monitoring Centre on Change, and to related social policy topics. Furthermore, EIR will support Eurofound in the process of reaching out to its stakeholders.

During this project, with the support of EIR, Eurofound will conclude reports including indicators of trends and analyses of policies and practices throughout Romania and Europe. These analyses will provide the basis for developing policy recommendations in the four priority areas of the project: a) increasing labour market participation and combating unemployment, b) improving working conditions and making work sustainable throughout the life course, c) development of industrial relations and d) improving living standards and promoting social cohesion.

For more information on reports or data developed please access <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu>



**Iulian Oneaşcă**



## The capacity of the local public administration for European affairs



The Institute for Development Policies and the European Institute of Romania (EIR), with the support of the University of Craiova, Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences organized on 13 June 2014 the event entitled *The capacity of the local public administration for European affairs: Institutional opportunities and challenges*.

The event was attended by students, representatives of the local public administration of Oltenia, academia and representatives of the non-governmental sector.

The themes presented in the panel were the preliminary results of the study entitled *The capacity of the local public administration for European affairs: Institutional opportunities and challenges*, the legislative framework and the institutional mechanisms of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) as a flexible tool that can be used by the local public administration to attract non-reimbursable funds and to offer public services at the required standards of cost and quality.

**Mrs. Gabriela Drăgan**, Director General of the European Institute of Romania, highlighted the need to reform the Romanian public administration and make it compatible with the European administration, stating that “an efficient administration is needed not just to absorb funds, as the funds are not a purpose in themselves, but to provide quality services to the citizens and a predictable environment for the private businesses - the administration is an instrument to provide a favourable environment both to the citizens and the businesses”.

**Mrs. Anca Simion**, Counsellor at the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, Directorate of Managing Authority for European Territorial Cooperation Programs, presented the Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification, simplification and improvement of the establishment and functioning of such groupings. Mrs. Simion also referred to the updating of the national legislative framework, namely the

OUG No 127/2007, as regards the new aspects introduced by the amendments to the regulation mentioned.

**Mr. Cătălin Timofciuc**, Counsellor at Iași County Council, presented the development strategy, objectives and project portfolio as well as the challenges of EURONEST EGTC.

**Mr. Florin Păsătoiu**, President of the Institute for Development Policies, pointed out that, in EU’s institutional mechanism, the “local” gained substance as regards the possibilities of development and public policy design. Mr. Păsătoiu stated that “the issue is to what extent the local public administration can become a partner of the European institutions and to what extent can the public administration in Oltenia region succeed in being a promoter and agent of change, becoming an actor on the public policy scene in Brussels. Does it have the tools to facilitate dialogue and make itself heard in Brussels, to lobby in order to promote its interests at the regional level? Because beyond the national interest that we all assume to a lesser or greater extent of patriotism - which I believe each of us has - proximity needs to impose a regional patriotism and interest”.

The conference *The capacity of the local public administration for European affairs: Institutional opportunities and challenges* is part of the *Program of public policy analyses and debates* launched by the Institute for Development Policies in 2013, which aims to evaluate public policies, the development of the public administration’s capacity to face the challenges and obligations deriving from the statute of full membership to the European Union and to increase the public authorities’ level of responsibility and transparency.



The study and the presentations are available on the Institute for Development Policies website at the following address: <http://ipd.ro/events-calendar/capacitatea-administratiei-publice-locale-pentru-afaceri-europene-intre-oportunitati-si-provocari-institutionale>

## ECHR - 20 years in Romania



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chamber of Deputies organized jointly the event *Romania and the European Convention on Human Rights - 20 years*, thus celebrating 20 years since Romania, on 20 June 1994, ratified the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

The event, organized in Bucharest, had two components: an anniversary conference on 18 June and a seminar on 19 June.

The conference was attended by Romanian judges at the Court in Strasbourg, Government Agents for the European Court of Human Rights, judges at the High Court of Cassation and Justice, magistrates at the High Council of the Judiciary, representatives of Parliament and of non-governmental organizations, etc.

During the conference, the participants underlined both Romania's relation to the Convention's system, and the impact of the Convention in Romania, since the entry into force up to the present.

The presentations mentioned the experience of the national judges at the ECHR, the experience of the members of Parliament that were also members of Romania's delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the experience of the Government Agents, as well as the experience of those who participated in person in the procedure before the Court. At the same time, the role of the Convention in law-making was underlined and a series of aspects regarding the constitutionality and Convention control, regarding the direct application and enforcement of the Convention were presented to the audience. It was emphasised that the number of friendly settlements and successful cases for Romania's Government was higher than the number of cases in which Romania was convicted.

In the first part of the seminar "The enforcement of ECHR judgments in the cases against Romania" the process of enforcing the ECHR judgements was presented both from a national and a European perspective.

The early experience of the enforcement of the ECHR judgements was evoked and present challenges were mentioned.

The second part of the seminar featured the experience of the national authorities in enforcing ECHR judgements. The participants discussed the pilot decision on the restitution of nationalised properties, the process of execution regarding the group of cases on detention conditions, the dissemination of ECHR cases - an essential instrument for adapting the judiciary practice, as well as the initiation of a series of legislation changes to support the enforcement of ECHR judgements.

The main conclusion reached over the two days was that, on the whole, the European Convention of Human Rights had and continues to have positive effects in Romania at the level of legislation which was modified to reach the standards of the Convention, as well as that of the citizens, who are now much more aware of their rights.

Laura Mihăilescu

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