

Morari, Cristina

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EXPERIENCE OF ROMANIA IN THE ELABORATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DOMESTIC POLICIES OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: LESSONS FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA.

Cristina Morari

Moldova State University

mcristy@ mail.ru

Abstract: *This article represents an analysis of the experience of Romania in accession and integration of the state into the European Union. It is a tentative to identify Romanian domestic policies of European integration. In order to achieve this objective, the study is focused on analyzing the evolution of Romania accession negotiations, internal and external activities and problems of country's European integration. Another important goal of the article was to identify some important conclusions for the European roadmap of the Republic of Moldova under the experience of Romania. The main lesson for the Republic of Moldova presented by the author is that for a successful European integration of the Republic of Moldova it is essential to prepare the country from inside by formulating and providing in practice concrete tasks and mechanisms in the internal policies of the country.*

Keywords: European integration, internal policies, experience, accession, negotiations, lessons.

JEL Classification:

1. INTRODUCTION

The success of the European Union foundation, the high level of its member states development and the benefits and advantages it offers, made this structure attractive from all points of view. Thus, the idea of integration into the European Union becomes one of the foreign policy priorities of the most post-socialist states, especially as the Western vector manifested itself as a viable political option in the context of a new world order shaping. Simultaneously, the process of European integration highlighted, especially for the Eastern Europe countries, the motivation and

the necessary model for achieving stable democracies, functional market economy, initiation and development of reforms.

At the same time, participation into an integrationist group determines a series of transformations for the participating states, at a more or less extent. The magnitude of these changes varies depending on the stage of integration and may take the form of institutional redefinition and sectional policies adoption.

In general, the external dimension of European integration for the states wishing to obtain the membership perspective is reflected by the European Union's conditionality policy towards them and it is manifested through negotiations based on the requirements submitted by the Union. Thus, the integration process of Romania (as well as of other candidate countries), but especially its accession to the European community, was conducted by the accomplishment of the conditionality elements imposed through the four basic conditions for membership: *political criteria* – guaranteeing democracy and the rule of law; *economic criteria* - the existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the European Union; *legal criteria* – the adoption of the entire *acquis communautaire*; and *administrative criteria* - to ensure the institutions stability and the ability to take on the obligations of European Union membership. (Bărbulescu, 2006) These conditions or criteria may be qualified by candidate states as outside conditions which performance requires numerous negotiations, structural dialogues and signing of significant documents on specific areas. But they are to be implemented within the state candidates through the development and implementation of domestic policies of European integration in order to prepare the country for accession to the European structures. In this context, it is important, especially for the Republic of Moldova, to analyze the way in which Romania as a candidate country has established a program for accession preparation and for fulfillment of the obligations that implies the access to the European single market structures and activities.

2. PRACTICE OF ROMANIA EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Romania, following the example of its neighbors in Central Europe (Czech Republic and Slovakia, Hungary and Poland) definitely expressed its desire to return to Europe, through integration into NATO and the European Union, viewing this vector as a fundamental objective in the post-socialist reorientation of its relationship with Western countries, to which Romania is connected by strong cultural and civilization traditions. Although it's initial approach was more a formal one, the Romanian state being far from the Copenhagen criteria, the first results of the new

guidelines were produced in 1990 with the signing of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EEC. In the second stage, Romania has reached a level of political and institutional development that made possible its acceptance by the European Union as an associate member when the Europe Agreement entered into force in early 1995 (Filipescu, Fuerea 1996). This agreement established legal and institutional framework of the Romanian-EU relations and had as a primary objective the preparation of Romania's EU accession. It was also a catalyst for developing and finishing Romania's transition process to a new political and economic system with the assistance of the Community. At that time, bearing in mind that the preparation for membership requires a national effort, political parties and academia representatives of Romania elaborated the Snagov Declaration (Nicolaescu, 1996) in which the "*National Strategy for preparation of Romania's accession to the European Union.*" was stated. Thus, the focus of the state was placed on achieving the goal of membership from the initial phase of the European integration process. However, after considering Romania's application for EU membership, the European Commission Opinion from 1997 was unfavorable to Romania, reckoning that it could not cope with the accession and the medium term economic requirements. In response, the Romanian government launched the *National Programme for the adoption of the acquis communautaire*. In this document, Romania announced its intentions to create a functioning market economy, to implement tighter border controls, to pursue strengthening of legislative framework, etc. But the Romanian government's modest achievements in the immediately following period disappointed the European Union. The report presented by the European Commission in 1998 highlighted poor economic performance, problems of small and medium enterprises development and of the legal system strengthening and public administration reform. (Ivan, 2007)

The 1999 Helsinki event was significant in Romania's history, when the European Council decided to hold bilateral intergovernmental conferences on starting negotiations with Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, Bulgaria and Malta, which made it possible officially to launch negotiations for accession of Romania to the European Union in 2000.

In the first half of 2000, during the Portuguese presidency of the European Union, Romania has opened and provisionally closed five chapters of negotiations regarding Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, Science and Research, Education, Training and Youth, External Relations and Common Foreign and Security Policy. (Neculau, Constantine, 2002) Unfortunately, poor economic performance, lack of legal and economic framework in compliance with the requirements of the European Union had removed the accession of Romania. At the same time, the negotiation process revealed a lack of training of Romanian institutions, a lack of specialists in different areas of

integration, poor coordination between ministries and a failure to submit position papers in accordance to deadlines. (Daianu, Vranceanu, 2002)

The new government established as a result of elections from autumn 2000, sought to accelerate and intensify preparations for accession to the EU through institutional changes - meaning the core of the national system of coordination of the European integration activity, creating the *Ministry of European Integration* whose functions were to elaborate strategies, to regulate, to represent, to emanate state authority, and to administrate, manage and coordinate the *National Delegation for Negotiating Romania's Accession to the EU*. The *National Delegation* comprised sectional delegations for every chapter of negotiations. *National Program for Romania's Accession to the EU* updated in 2001 became the instrument for the implementation of pre-accession strategy launched by the Agenda 2000 and had as overall objective the achievement of the basic conditions for membership set by the Copenhagen European Council. This program also had as an intermediate target the fulfillment of the priorities of the *Partnership for Accession EU - Romania*. (National Programme for Romania's Accession to the EU, 2001) In fact, this program established the Romanian state's domestic duties in a strict accordance with the EU requirements.

The new negotiation strategy for Romania's EU accession was based particularly on the global negotiation process approach. The main accent shifted from the so - called light chapters of negotiations to those with an economic and social impact. Romania has focused its efforts on key chapters of negotiations related to the four freedoms (Free Movement of Goods, Free Movement of Capital, Free Movement of Services and Free Movement of People), chapters which had not been approached at all by the end of 2000. There also have been approached very difficult chapters of negotiations, such as Environment, Agriculture, Regional policies and Financial Control (Mazilu, 2005)

The defining elements of the negotiation strategy for 2001 consisted therefore in predominantly quantitative approach of this process, being concentrated on analyzing of the entire *acquis communautaire*. External successes manifested themselves through an extensive consultation process with the European Commission, Member States and candidate countries' negotiating teams. The new strategic and institutional approach led to a substantial progress in the negotiation process. Thus, in 2001, a range of complementary position papers were drafted and officially sent to EU. (Apostol, 2002) As a result, at the end of that year, Romania has provisionally closed 9 chapters of negotiations out of 17 opened chapters. The remove of barriers of free movement of Romanians in the Schengen area in early 2002, was also a positive sign, indicating that Romania started to make progress, especially in adaptation of the legislation compatible with the European law in the field of border control. For the period of 2002-2003, the main objective was to open all negotiation

chapters, provisionally to close most of them, on the basis of the advanced accession preparations and fulfillment of commitments made during the negotiations. In this context, the “*Plan of priority actions for preparing of accession to the European Union in December 2003 - December 2004 period.*” has been developed. It was a detailed road-map of Romania for that time and identified a number of key priorities such as: acceleration of public administration reform, judicial system reform, fight against corruption, improving of the business environment, strengthening the administrative capacity to implement the *acquis communautaire* in the agricultural field and environmental protection, border security etc. (Priorities in preparation for joining the European Union in December 2003 - December 2004, 2003)

Romania managed to conclude EU accession negotiations in December 2004, but the success was accompanied by 11 conditions relating to the need of continuation of judicial reform, fight against corruption, reducing steel production, environmental protection, etc. For this reason, the Accession Treaty from 2005 contained a specific safeguard mechanism. There had also been started up a comprehensive monitoring process on Romania's preparations and results by the time of its accession. Progress reports from 2005 and 2006 reported that Romania was able to remove areas of serious concern, which could lead to the postponement of accession for 2008, particularly due to the progress it has made in combating corruption and border management. For the first time, corruption did not figure among the areas of serious concern of the Commission. It is commonly accepted that the accession negotiations have accelerated and structured the process of modernization and development of the country, by boosting the domestic process of accession preparation. As it can be observed, the consolidation of the rule of law through judicial reform, fight against corruption and ensuring of freedom of expression, strengthening of free competition (in order to allow the development of investment and achievement of a favorable business climate), preparation of the administrative staff, that insure the European law enforcement, and investment in research, development and environmental protection remained the main priorities throughout the accession negotiations. Since some problems remained after accession too, in its process of integration into the European community Romania has been under threat of safeguard clauses being monitored until now mainly in justice and home affairs, taking into account the existence of unresolved corruption cases. So, the experience of Romania regarding European integration shows that this process continues after the accession through the continuity of reforms and implementation of European standards, as integration presumes besides accession a more complex process of returning to Europe, not only from political, economic and legal point of view, but a socio-cultural one as well. Further European integration of Romania is demonstrated by the post-accession measures aimed primarily at the new Member State's ability to adapt in a context in which integration issues come to

be significantly different from those of familiarization with the requirements of the *acquis* requirements that are specific to accession negotiations. These measures, besides the recovery of areas related to agricultural funding, food safety, judicial reform, fight against corruption and the continuation of the *National Reform Programme* implementation, as European Commission in its latest assessment recommends (Country-specific recommendations, 2009), also include the need for accommodation of the population to the new status of being European citizens.

The continuous integration of the country is manifested by the extensive training to achieve two major objectives, namely the accession to Euro zone and the Schengen area, Romania being regularly assessed in this field by the European structures.

3. CONCLUSIONS FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Studying the experience of the European integration of Romania it is possible to draw some lessons for the Republic of Moldova. The main conclusion which emerges from the study lies in the fact that Romania was mainly oriented towards accession and negotiations with the European Union and was less focused on the development and implementation of European integration domestic policies. As a result, there have been created a number of problems that are still present in Romania and in its process of continuous integration and accommodation in the European Union. Thus, it becomes clear that the Republic of Moldova must prepare the country for European integration from inside.

If a parallel in the European integration preparation of Romania and the Republic of Moldova at the national level is to be drawn, it is necessary to mention that in Romania case for accession preparation to the European Union, besides the *Ministry of European Integration National Delegation for Negotiating Romania's Accession to the EU*, there have been created a number of national institutions. Thus, Romania has established the Executive Committee for European Integration, Inter-Ministerial Committee for European Integration, European integration departments in ministries and other public institutions, Transparency Committee that monitor the use of EU funds, the Permanent Mission of Romania under the European Union, European Institute of Romania.

In the case of the Republic of Moldova, European integration from the beginning has been interpreted as a task of foreign policy, oriented especially to the intensification of contacts with the European community and issuing some messages in this direction. Thus, this mission was mainly of the *General Department for European Integration* within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova. Later, to strengthen national institutions work and initiative on European

integration and to promote the strategy of accession to the European Union, according to Government Resolution of 2003, the *Department of European Integration* was created within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Osoian, 2008) Simultaneously with the creation of this subdivision, similar departments were created in all ministries and departments. Thus, in 2005, the name of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, was completed with the phrase „*and European Integration*”. Awareness of the true trajectory of Moldova's European integration has developed slowly. Already in 2002, according to the presidential initiative, the *National Commission for European Integration* was created. Through its basic tasks there was that of developing the European Strategy for European Integration of the Republic of Moldova. But only in 2005, the above mentioned strategy was adopted in which, in fact, practically all the problems of development of the Republic of Moldova have been included, and the country's European future depends on their solution. As a domestic document, the strategy aimed at preparing the country for accession to the European community, viewing the integration as a fundamental national interest. Therefore it includes, for each domain of activity, the analysis of the legislative background of the Republic of Moldova, the analysis of the institutional framework, the formulation of existing problems, and short and medium term priorities. (*European Strategy of the Republic of Moldova*, 2005). However, this strategy can not be regarded as an effective and essential one for the European preparation of the Republic of Moldova, being too general and having no concrete methods for achieving the purposed objectives.

There are many reasons which could explain these circumstances. But the most important one would be the promotion for a long time of a „Moldovan policy of European integration”, which can be considered as an inconsistent, declarative and propagandistic one combined with a lack of political will that Chisinau had during communist government. (Vasilescu, 2004) Another feature that denotes the lack of initiative of Chisinau is that everything that relates to Moldova's European integration mainly comes from the European structures, that is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, Action Plan Moldova-EU, Neighborhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership. It is true that with establishment of a new government in Chisinau, the Alliance of European Integration, there have been made important external actions. Since January 2010 it is negotiating with the European Union the Association Agreement and making significant efforts to obtain the visa liberalization and sign the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. But the most important thing lies in the need for combining these external actions with the domestic actions.

So, firstly it is necessary to develop a National Plan for preparation of Moldova's accession to the European Union, which would determine its own path forward European integration vector. Secondly, it is necessary to create a highly trained team consisting of experts in various fields of

European integration, in order to avoid the problems faced by Romania during the accession negotiations due to unprepared Romanian institutions, lack of specialists and insufficient coordination between ministries. Finally, it is necessary to elaborate the National Policy of European integration and a Strategy for European integration of the country that will include not only the country's modernization, but also preparation of the population for the status of European citizens. In this context, according to Professor Grigore Vasilescu, a European Training Program would have been welcomed as a particularly important task for a wide and complex European education of population, which is strictly necessary so that to change the people's mentality and consciousness, without that it is impossible to go to Europe or bring Europe home. A program of this kind is significant for creating the basic mechanisms needed to carry out practical tasks of European integration. (Vasilescu, 2008)

Therefore, analyzing the practical realization of the European integration objectives by the Romania as well as by other EU Member States, Moldova will be able to avoid gaps and shortcomings faced by them. Correct formulation of domestic policies of European integration, the creation of mechanisms for their achievement and strengthening of the relations with Member States of the European Union will indisputably contribute to elaboration of a more effective action plan for Moldova's European integration.

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