

A short Timeline- Accession negotiations of Romania

In April 1995 the Constitution meeting of the EU- Romania Joint Parliamentary Committee took place in Bucharest. In February 2000, Romania started negotiations for membership of the EU, it was foreseen, that by the end of 2004 Romania is closing negotiations. Till now, October 2004, there are 27 of the 31 chapters of the *acquis communautaire* provisionally closed. It is worth to empathize that the EU is watching this process very carefully. And the key issue is not to close chapters, much more the process of transformation is seen in terms of implementation of new legal aspects at all government levels. Obviously, this should go hand in hand with the ambition, to create capacity in all sectors of public service and the legal authorities, to achieve this goal.

Today I want to focus on three topics which, from my perspective, describe the difficulties of the accession negotiations best:

Human rights

First let me emphasize, that there are obviously strong efforts in Romania to strengthen the human rights situation. Romania has ratified the main human rights convention. Romania has still not ratified Additional Protocol No.12 to the European Convention on Human Rights prohibiting discrimination on any grounds. The EC supports the introduction of strict rules on inter- country adoption, which appear to be in the line with the UN- Convention. But on the other side Romania remains a country of origin, transit and destination for victims of trafficking in human beings. Main targets of traffickers are young women and girls who are sexually exploited in destination countries. The implementation of a witness protection scheme would be of key importance for an efficient policy against trafficking.

Freedom of expression:

Many organisations in the media business are economically not viable, and their existence depends of the support of political and business interests. There are credible reports about elected officials using public office to influence editorial policy of local newspaper. The concentration at the media market compromises editorial independence, and studies have observed that TV news are notably too less critical to the government. At least there are still a lot of very serious reports of physical attacks against journalists. Just to mention: The amnesty international report gave the keyword of the "Berlusconisation" of the local press.

Last but not least, media concentration and media dependence are not a Romanian problem. Unfortunately, in some other European countries this serious threat of main European values is still alive or even growing in recent years.

Minorities (ROMA)

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance wrote in one of its annual reports: **“Throughout Europe the Roma suffer seriously from prejudice, and are the victims of a racism deeply rooted in society.** They are often the target of racist and intolerant practices, which are sometimes violent, and their basic rights are frequently infringed and endangered.”

There are still some worrying facts in the present Romanian Roma- policy:

The positive implementation of the Roma Strategy, adopted in 2001, will remain isolated and unsustainable if national and local coordination remains as weak. The de facto discrimination against the Roma minority continues to be widespread and the social inequalities remain considerable. So the EC points out, that the cases of child marriages, notably within the ROMA minorities, are incompatible with a modern understanding of human rights. On the other hand there are positive developments, particularly in the education sector.

My last point is: Roma policy is not only Minorities policy it is Human rights policy. And any kind of repression against any individual is incompatible with main European values, irrelevant in which European country.