

OANA MOCANU, ROMANIAN EUROEXPERT: I DON'T BELIEVE "RED FLAGS" CAN PUT US TO WAIT FOR THE EU

Published at: 15-05-2006

Source: Portal EUROPE



Oana Mocanu is an Expert and Project Coordinator at the European Institute of Romania (EIR), within the European Studies Unit and also the Editor-in-Chief of the Romanian Journal of European Affairs. The studies, undertaken by EIR continue to prove to be a very useful tool in the decision-making process and the permanent and active dialogue between the researchers and the public administration representatives.

Ms. Mocanu, what are the main purposes of the European Institute of Romania (EIR); on what does it focus, since it was founded?

The European Institute of Romania began its activity in the year 2000 with the general purpose of supporting the Romanian public administration in the EU accession process.

What tools does the Institute possess to implement successfully its goals?

In a nutshell, I would say there are three basic tools: research, training and translation. The EIR's activity is concentrated on these three main areas: research (policy-oriented studies) meant to support the public administration in the decision-making process, training of the central and local administration in European affairs and translation of the *acquis communautaire* into Romanian.

What initiatives the Institute has had and in what projects was it involved? Moreover, with what those initiatives and projects have contributed to the improvement of, let's say, the social or public administration's environment?

A major project of the Institute has been the series of Pre-Accession Impact Studies, developed since 2001, with a result of almost 50 studies designed, at first, to support the Romanian public administration in drafting the position papers in the EU negotiation process and, later on, oriented to supporting and improving the policy-formulation process of the decision-makers. I think this project went beyond a purely academic exercise, being oriented towards very concrete policy recommendations in different areas. Another important program of the Institute has been the training of the central and local public administration representatives in European affairs, this type of projects being developed and managed by the Institute on different sectors, from industrial policy, competition, regional development, environment, agricultural policy to justice and home affairs, security and defense policy. The Institute is also committed to support and enhance the debate among the civil society, academia on European issues, with a particular focus on EU accession, through a wide range of public conferences and dissemination of our publications. Speaking of publications let me also mention the Romanian Journal of European Affairs, our quarterly review which has hosted since 2001 high-ranking officials, professors from prestigious European universities and research centers, our collection of Working Papers, the series of European policy brochures and glossaries. All these publications are intended for the public administration, universities, research centers, NGOs, trade unions, business unions, embassies.

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What is your personal opinion on both Bulgaria and Romania's "chances" to get postponed for their European Union's accession and can this mean "somewhere" in 2007, but not necessarily 2008, as Cotidianul Daily suggests?

I would prefer not to think of the "chance" of Romania or Bulgaria getting postponed and I'd rather think positively and, at the same time, be realistic. My personal opinion is that both countries have strong chances to enter EU by 1st January 2007. I don't really believe that, at this stage, the number of 'red flags' left or a comparison between each country's number of 'red flags' can have a say in the decision that has to be made. The process is irreversible and, if we also take into account the 'enlargement fatigue' in the member states of the European Union and the end of the 'reflection period' the EU has taken regarding the Constitution, a delay in both our countries' accession would only accelerate the feeling of unease at general EU level, not to mention in the public opinion of the two countries.

Do you think the European Commission's Report for both our states on Tuesday, 16th of May will bring more answers and clarity or more questions and doubts? What can expect from it in general?

Like all the previous reports, it will obviously make reference to the progress made and to the specific measures still to be taken. It is difficult to say that the Report we are about to receive on 16th will have a clear statement of a date or last minute calendar. If it does, it will be accompanied by IFs and DOs or DONTs, since the conditions that are yet to be met are a 'hot' subject on both countries' agenda and I personally think that a pressure on the authorities can only do good in the final steps before the accession. It is already a wide-known fact that the EU conditionality has played a positive role in the candidate states' preparation for accession, so 'a few more drops' of conditionality would only represent an incentive to comply with the commitments already made.

If you were to nominate one area where Romania (and Bulgaria) can actively contribute to the development of EU policies, what would that be?

If you refer to the areas where Romania can contribute actively, I would first of all think of the position of Romania as future Eastern border of the EU. It is my strong belief that Romania should and will have a say in the new European neighbourhood policy (ENP), with concrete and active measures and programs to contribute to the stability in the area and also to ensure the development of the economic relations in the new context of the ENP. Also Romania and Bulgaria can play a major role in consolidating the cooperation in the Black Sea Region, and, as you already know, concrete measures and initiatives are already put into practice within our foreign policy.

As a researcher in the field of the European Studies, how do you think the youngsters and the population with higher education will "behave" after Romania and Bulgaria access the EU? Will they still prefer going abroad for the better implementing their knowledge and securing their professional future or they will be more likely staying here and be encouraged by the new circumstances and possibilities?

I think the degree of young people going abroad after the accession, looking for attractive and competitive jobs will register an increase, given the whole range of new opportunities and the gradual removal of barriers. I would not say though that the extent of this increase or the migration phenomenon will become an issue. And, after all, the national decision-makers do have a role in persuading the young to stay, through concrete plans, actions, programs to invest, I mean really invest in the human resources, to stimulate the general business climate and to offer incentives for them to

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build their professional future, as you say, at home.

Is it likely in Romania for the young people to get involved in the public administration and really give their share for a better work of the institutional "machine"? What is the public administration status right now?

As far as I know, young people do enter the public administration system. They have a special interest in the ministries, agencies or other governmental bodies dealing with programming and management of the structural funds, where high expertise will be most needed. And I know that the Romanian Government has recently decided to raise the number of people involved in the coordination and management of the future structural funds, the increase of the absorption capacity of the EU funds being a priority. So, I guess the offer can meet the demand.

What relations have so far the Romanian institutions in general, as well as EIR established with Bulgarian counterparts? Do you think the present connections are satisfactory and if not so, what can be done for their improvement according to your point of view?

Well, the present can always be subject to improvement. And this may also apply to the relations you asked about. Both the European Institute of Romania and the Bulgarian European Institute are members of European Policy Institutes Network (EPIN) – a network of think-tanks and policy institutes focusing on EU political debate and analysis. In this network, we have tried to develop and increase the EU awareness among the civil society through a series of conferences organized on different EU-related topics, some of them focused on the Convention on the Future of Europe and the EU Constitutional Treaty. Furthermore, as one of the founding member of RECSA (Romanian European Community Studies Association), the European Institute of Romania developed several projects in partnership with our Bulgarian counterpart, Bulgarian European Community Studies Association (BECSA), namely two Jean Monnet projects: "2007 –One enlargement is not enough" and "Young scholars from the three candidate countries for an enlarged European Union" (also with the Turkish ECSA). In my opinion, it would be an excellent idea to further build a network of research centers and European institutes in our region, focused on increased partnership on economic, security, regional development issues that are of utmost importance to this area.

Interview by Nikolai Yotov, editor for Bulgaria at worldsecuritynetwork. Portal EUROPE wishes to thank the author for this text.

EIR papers can be found [here](#).