

## ROMANIAN MINISTER OF EU-INTEGRATION IN AN INTERVIEW FOR PORTAL EUROPE

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### **Romanian Minister of European Integration Ms. Anca Boagiu in an interview for Portal EUROPE.**

#### **Reporter Ognian Boyadjiev**

#### **Ms. Boagiu, what were your feelings and emotions on May 16, when the Commission's monitoring report was presented with no recommendation for a 2007 accession for Romania?**

May 16 was a date of great importance for both our countries. Nevertheless, we were not expecting a recommendation for the accession date in this Monitoring Report. And this is for a very strong reason: the accession date is clearly stated in the Accession Treaty as being 1st of January 2007. Thus, there was no surprise when we had a Monitoring Report without a recommended date. What was more important in this document was the added value it brought to the continuous assistance provided by the Commission.

I consider this monitoring report to be a very good one, not only because it highlights the progress that has been done by both countries, but because it gives a powerful incentive to continue our efforts in certain areas.

Thus, I see the analysis provided by this document to be far more relevant than the presence of a recommendation for an accession date. An accession date that we already know will be the 1st of January 2007 as stated in the European Council Conclusions.

#### **Did you join the festivities at the improvised party given by the Bulgarian observers to the European parliament in its headquarters?**

Unfortunately I could not take part due to other previous engagements. I believe that the accession will be a good moment for a common festivity this time.

#### **The May monitoring report does not recommend an accession date for Romania and Bulgaria. Some observers say that this shows the Commission is too hesitant and does not want to take the responsibility on such a sensitive issue; others say that there is no date for both countries because Bulgaria fails to carry out the reforms. What is your personal opinion?**

The accession date for Romania and Bulgaria has been stated in the Treaty of Accession. The Commission Report did not need to state a date of accession. It could have recommended a postponement of the date of accession in case one of our countries would have not fulfilled the measures under the special safeguard clause. But we proved that we have taken decisive measures to fulfill the accession criteria and that there is no need for the Commission to issue a recommendation of postponement.

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The fact that we will have another report in September can only be for our own benefit since we have more time to prove that we can be fully ready for EU accession.

**Are you satisfied with the content of the May monitoring report of the European Commission?**

There is no reason not to be satisfied with it. We consider these analyses done by the Commission very useful. Not only that they provide a clear picture of where we are, but they also have very useful recommendations of what steps lay ahead of us.

However, the last two reports were of great importance of us. With these reports we have proved that we are a country that keeps its promises and that once you have the political will delays can be overcome.

**Shortly after the May report was released, Romanian officials were quoted as calling for the next Commission's report to be presented as early as possible. What are the reasons for Romania to desire this report before October?**

We need to have the next Commission report earlier than October because in some countries, which have not ratified the Treaty of Accession yet, have very complicated procedures. We need to provide them with enough time to ratify the Treaty.

We have to take into consideration that an early report means earlier deadlines to comply with requirements. This will not be easy for Romania and Bulgaria but I believe that we have already proved we can speed up the reforms in order to become full members of the EU.

**Referring to the progress made by Bulgaria and Romania, the Chairman of the Foreign affairs committee of the Parliament of Luxembourg Mr. Ben Fayot told on June 12, in an interview for Portal EUROPE.BG, that "if one country is better prepared than the other, there would be no reason to make it wait because of the slower country". Is today the Bulgarian tempo of reforms an obstacle for the Romanian integration into the EU?**

Romania and Bulgaria have a common treaty of accession to the EU and they will join together at the 1st of January 2007. Our countries have started this path approximately at the same time. But during such an intense, such an outstanding and challenging experience, side-slips from one part or the other are normal, as we have to take into account different circumstances. During 2001 and 2004, Romania was governed by the social democrats that did not succeed in solving some issues of great concern for us, like the fight against corruption, the reform of the judiciary or the assurance of a competition environment in our economy. Furthermore, the negotiations were finished much late than they should have. Unlike Romania, Bulgaria was doing its job carefully and with more results according to European evaluations. The situation changed last year because Romania was benefiting from the work of a new and responsible government, while Bulgaria was stuck in an electoral crisis that made the authorities lose enough precious time. However, after the publication of the EC Reports in may this year, it was obvious for everybody that Bulgaria was speeding the reforms. I think that right now both Romania and Bulgaria are on the right track regarding the readiness for entering the EU at 1st of January 2007.

**Do you think it would be good for Romania, if the European institutions adopt a separate approach towards our two countries in evaluating their progress towards accession, and why?**

My opinion is that this approach was taken into consideration by the Commission during all these years. Even if Bulgaria and Romania signed the same Treaty, every evaluation report has separately treated the two countries. And it is perfectly normal to do this since you have to take into consideration different circumstances and different approaches. In the same time, our countries started this road together and we will cross the finish line together. We both traveled a long way to get here and we deserve to become

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members of the EU at 1st of January 2007.

Sofia and Bucharest hope the notification of the ratification in all 25 member states will be completed by 31 December 2006. Otherwise, would it be realistic for the accession treaty to be renegotiated?

I am positive that the ratification process will be ending until 1st of January 2007 and saying this I have in mind all the assurances received during my visits in the EU states. Furthermore, the remaining four states that will have to ratify our accession Treaty do have a schedule for this process and all of them are to end the procedures on time. Romania and Bulgaria benefit from the entire necessary support for being able to join the EU next year and I remind you the European Council's resolution which recommends that all member states ratify the accession treaty on time so that the envisioned date of entry not be jeopardized. In conclusion, I can not see any reason for our Treaty to be renegotiated. The conclusions of the European Council have stated very clearly that 1st of January 2007 remains the envisaged date of accession. Moreover, the Council recommended that the ratification process be continued in order to be finalized in due time.

I believe that these two conclusions are very positive for Romania and Bulgaria, a confirmation of our achievements in the integration process.

**Some EU-integration observers think Romania uses very skilled PR experts and lobbyists to help the membership preparations and the perfect dialogue and communication that Bucharest maintains with Brussels. Who are these lobbyists and are the financial parameters of the contracts a matter of public access?**

The partnership built between Romania and Brussels is one based on honesty and intensive communication. We put a strong accent on this dimension of the integration effort, namely the communication component.

The Ministry I am coordinating has at least a double mission: to inform our citizens about the advantages and responsibilities that will come with EU integration, but also to constantly keep the contact between Brussels and Bucharest. It is not a matter of PR experts, or proficient communication skills, as it is of permanently informing the Commission and the other responsible institutions about the current state. The Ministry of European Integration does not allocate funds for lobbying, and I am not aware of any public institution that would budget for this. On one hand, lobbying is part of any politician's life, and the Romanian EU observers are doing a very good job in this direction.

**In Brussels, and in Sofia, the charisma of Romanian Justice Minister Mrs. Monica Macovei is highly appreciated by the public opinion. Do you personally have sometimes the feeling that the Romanian success is more personally hers, rather than due to the whole government's merit?**

The charisma of Minister Macovei is indeed highly appreciated and for good reasons and on solid grounds. No one should and no one could deny the tremendous efforts done by our Minister of Justice. To put it very clear, she is part of the reason for which when I go to Brussels I feel proud to report on Romania's progress.

As we all know, Justice and Home Affairs was one of the most sensitive issues, an area red-flagged for quite some time. The fact that the colors now have changed is mainly due to her determination. Nevertheless, we are all part of a strong team working for a common goal -1st of January 2007- and this means that, as in any good team, you share everything, good or bad. Also, one should not forget about the determination and hard work of other members of the government or from other institutions involved in this process.

**Why does Romania wish to become a EU member-state?**

Becoming a EU member state is rediscovering our identity, regaining our natural status. We have been listening to the orchestra for so long, but only recently preparing to be part of it.

The European integration is a chance for Romania to modernize its institutions, its mentalities. Already the changes brought up by the integration process are becoming part of our ordinary lives. We have new institutions, new regulations, new opportunities and new challenges we have to face. It is a complex process that touches every layer. What we are going through is what we have assumed, not something we have been imposed.

**The Bulgarian Prime Minister Stanishev has recently said that the EU membership of Bulgaria will serve as "a financial compensation for the hardship during the transition from communism to democracy". Do you share this point of view?**

Sentimentally, it is true indeed. But I think that neither the Romanian nor Bulgaria should be naïve to believe that EU integration is an automatic process because of our recent history. And it is in my honest belief that both Romania and Bulgaria have undergone all the necessary steps for the European integration only in the light of the Copenhagen criteria... In other words, Romania and Bulgaria were neither mistreated nor favored by our European partners.