



December "Balkan Week" in Bucharest

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Goethe Institute from Bucharest, Romania, together with Instituto Cervantes, Polish Institute, "Deutsche Welle" radio station and the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe organized in Bucharest between 10-16 of December 2001 a "Balkan Week" aiming to evaluate the European integration chances of the region. The programme of the events included a two days symposium with the theme: "Romania and the Balkans. Own perception and image in the European Union", the presentation of movies focusing of specific problems in the area and a discussion about the urban culture and the gastronomy in South-Eastern Europe. At the discussions took part sociologists, journalists, political scientists, representatives of the non-governmental organizations from Romania, Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Germany, Poland and Spain. The points of view expressed by the participants outlined the "ups" and "downs" of the process of integration, with a specific emphasis on the Romanian case and his role it have in the South-Eastern Europe, such as the challenges of the process for the country from economic and cultural perspective.

By the integration of Romania and Bulgaria in the European Union the organization could have as an immediate aim to have closer relationships to Russia, in the long-term perspective of including also that country in the EU, appreciated Francisco Veiga, professor at the Autonomous University from Barcelona. In his opinion, the integration of Russia in the EU constitute the last aim of the European enlargement toward East. In that way, Europe will

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have access to a better market for their products, but also to the energy resources of that country. And, added Veiga, Europe will become a serious concurrent for the United States and China. Taking into account that situation, Romania must build up his new image, aware of himself, without waiting from outside the "European mark", avoiding to be only "a corridor to South-Eastern Europe, a door to the Islam", concluded Francisco Veiga.

The professor Bogdan Murgescu, from the Faculty of History from Bucharest, talked about some of the stereotypes related to the Balkan area, from the point of view of the Ottoman heritage. He spoke about, for example, the idea concerning to which, the corruption from the area have his roots from the ottoman times, explaining that, in fact, in the present times, that phenomenon have completely other mechanisms, more sophisticated.

It's way the countries from the region must be fully aware of these misperceptions and differences of culture. Within the European Union, appreciated Zoe Petre, president of the Institute of Regional Cooperation and Conflicts Prevention and former presidential counselor, they are big "difference of perception and different degrees of acceptance of the countries from South-Eastern Europe". And the question is how can the candidate countries can fit or get off his own practices, in special the economic ones. For the Romanian case, said Zoe Petre, it is necessary the organization of a national discussion about "what we are and want to be in the next 30 years". And, least but not last we must also know from our European partners what are the expectations of the European partners.

"We, citizens of Europe, we cannot agree that the Europe border will not include the Balkans", stated Ricardo Angoso, from the Spanish review "Politica". He explain that Romania have a word to say in Europe, but the Romanian authorities must be aware of the hard reforms necessary for the EU integration. Ricardo Angoso stressed a comparison between the Spanish European and Euro-Atlantic process of integration, after the end of Franco regime and that of Romania, considering that the last one must show more attention in preparing the accession documents, for avoiding the eventual "clash" with the economic concurrence of the EU market.

Concerning a survey on the EU perception in Romania, held at the request of the European Commissioner, Romano Prodi, for the Romanian, the Union constitute an "economic and cultural community", showed the sociologist Melania Borjun. But, beside the opinion polls and qualitative research concerning the EU perception by the Romanians showing a stronger support for the integration, added another sociologist, Cristian Parvulescu, it's very

important to explain to the population the risks and concrete implications of that process.

The discussions from the symposium showed, in big lines, the principal problems faced by the European enlargement process, from the point of view of the Romanian elite representative and, in the same time, from the perspective of the European countries. Such discussions are very useful for better outlining the strategies and projects in view of the integration, taking into account the experiences of other countries that had the same experiences, but also the problems faced now by the European Union itself, who is passing through a very long and difficult process of reorganization.

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