

**Prospects for the European Integration -
The View of Romania as a future EU Member State**

Address by

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*Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends of the Institut für Europäische Politik,*

I am glad to be here today with you. I would like to thank Dr. Matthias Jopp, the director of the Institut für Europäische Politik for giving me the opportunity to speak today about Romania's views as a future EU Member State.

Walter Hallstein, one of the first Presidents of the European Commission and a true European used to say: "*In Europe, one should have visions to be realistic*". I think we all share the vision of a strong, united Europe. This wouldn't be possible without Romania. I'd suggest those who fear or don't trust Romania to follow the vision, and not the fear. Fear only delays things and prevents us from accomplishing our visions.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 is rightly celebrated as a symbol of both European freedom and unity. Less well-known to the public opinion in EU member states is the remarkable transformation that has since swept across Central and Eastern Europe. It still has a long way to go, but Europe can be proud that its fifth enlargement has been so comprehensive. Romania and Bulgaria are to complete it in 2007.

Romania has come a long way since 1989. The European model has been a yardstick we measured against all along during the rapid process of modernization of mentalities and institutions. We are now contemplating a new stage, where our experience and expectations are pooled alongside the European heritage and called to contribute to the current comprehensive process of introspection leading to the Europe of the future.

On 1st January 2007 Romania will be ready to join the EU. EU accession has long ago ceased to be regarded in Romania as a foreign policy issue or as a transposition exercise. It currently defines an unprecedented process of self-assessment and reform that will take Romania not only within European institutions, but, foremost, where Romanians have for centuries felt they belong, i.e. inside a family of shared European values and objectives.

I do not intend to take you through our "Progress Report" accounting developments in the sensitive reform fields, but I would just like to stress that out of the 11 "red flags" we have scored in the European Commission's 2004 Comprehensive Monitoring Report, 9 have been properly dealt with and therefore removed from the "thorny list". The Commission's monitoring reports and the European Parliament's assessments shape our steadfast log and we are confidently awaiting the spring reviews that will confirm January 1st 2007 as the historic conclusion of the 5th wave of EU enlargement. We also trust that it will provide

credible evidence in support of the timely completion of the ratification process of our Accession Treaty in all member states, including *Germany*.

The EU accession has triggered a very complex process of reforms in my country. The European project has a symbolic meaning – our return to the European family. It has pushed removal of what hindered us from being competitive, it has pushed us to adopting thousands of pages of legislation but it has also made us see that we still have problems to solve and that we need to tackle these very quickly.

We know these problems quite well. A fierce battle against corruption is being fought and hard efforts to reform justice are tirelessly carried out. My only message to you is this: corruption has been dug out of the hole where, for many years, it laid undisturbed by officials and even civil society representatives who paid lip service to tirelessly fighting it. This Government is making progress. EU accession was the catalyst that triggered the current overhaul of the justice and police systems, but also of our mentalities and standards, and EU membership will create the healthy environment that will completely heal the scars of this terrible scourge.

Today we have one of the most generous political and societal models for preserving and developing the cultural identity and the rights of national minorities. From a state which was much criticized in the past, we turned into a model for inter-ethnic harmony, proving to have a solid legal framework guaranteeing the rights of minorities.

Romania brings a lot to Europe: the economic resources of a large market and a rich country, a unique cultural patrimony, highly-skilled people, stability and security at EU borders.

We are now close to the goal. But attaining this goal is not the end of the road. It will much more mark a new beginning. The preparations for the post-accession stage are just as important as the current efforts to fulfil commitments to the letter upon the moment of accession and we are devoting more and more energy to laying the ground for an effective, constructive and well calibrated Romanian membership in the EU.

Distinguished audience,

What added value can Romania bring to the development of the Union?

As an acceding country, Romania has a direct stake in joining a cohesive Union, able to deal with the current challenges: globalization, emerging markets, non-conventional security risks and an ageing population. These realities can be properly addressed through structural reforms in all Member States and *Germany*, with all the pains that it takes, is doing its part of reforms – and not a small one – meant to alleviate the burden of necessary reform throughout the entire EU.

We believe in the need for strong economies, which can uphold social solidarity, education and research, and provide working places. From its first days in office, the Romanian Government has embarked on a comprehensive fiscal relief package conducive to economic growth and increased investment. This is our strategic response to the need to ensure solidarity and social justice. Romania ranks currently second place after India insofar as the number of IT specialists is concerned.

Our ongoing high growth rates that rank us high beside the EU's fresh members are good news not only to the Romanian tax payer, but also to the EU. Sustainable growth is our best response to the support we are receiving through the EU budget. Our still untapped investment opportunities, seasoned with Romania's labour potential, provide a mix that can consistently subscribe to overall growth in the EU and open new regional windows of opportunity. Our German partners are already aware of this, since *Germany* is currently the fourth investor on the Romanian market – and we definitely wish for its ranking to improve.

We in Romania have taken the challenge and started our approach from *our national goal: providing our citizens with the same quality of life as the rest of the Europeans*, based on a catching-up process that will wipe out the economic performance discrepancies that separate us from the developed member states. Our Government policies are inspired by the need to accurately balance economic liberalism with social protection, building upon the assumption that a credible social protection is rooted in sustainable growth. Combined structural reforms in the economic and social fields hold the key to success, to the extent to which EU-assumed goals, such as the completion of the Internal Market in areas such as communication, energy and financial services, as well as Trans European Networks infrastructure programs are fulfilled. At the same time, the implementation of cohesion policies can create the conditions for the revised Lisbon Strategy to promote the huge economic potential in the new and future member states.

Social justice is a fundamental value in our societies, and it rightly places the citizen at the heart of all European initiatives. That is why we must create conditions for our citizens to be better educated, receive quality lifelong training, have fair access to the labour market and a solid infrastructure for research, development and innovation. As an example, in Romania 70% of its territory is covered by mobile communications. Besides we are second in the world in terms of per capita IT high specialists.

Europe is a continent in which a multitude of cultures come together, each bringing their own unique contribution to our societies. As we celebrate the diversity this brings to our societies we must also uphold the place of international institutions and ideals as part of our modern cultural life. Romania responds to the global culture of Europe with a confident assertion of its own role and identity as the vehicle by which the values of peace, prosperity and democracy are realized. Most educated Europeans have always been part of a common European cultural world. The Latin language was central in this until quite recently. Let me remind this distinguished audience that the Romanian prince Dimitrie Cantemir, a European of the earliest hour and one of the finest encyclopedic minds of 18th century Europe wrote, at the request of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences his capital work *Descriptio Moldaviae* in Latin. *The formerly unifying role of Latin has today been taken over by the common use of the euro, by the day to day participation in the activities of our common European institutions, by other elements that lend Europe a face and should make it graspable, understandable, and ultimately, again lovable and desirable.*

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me also dwell for a little while on Romania's views regarding the contribution it can make to a dependable, outward-looking and anticipatory CFSP.

Romania sees itself as a bridge between the West and the East, lying in an area of confluence, on NATO's and EU's borders, where European and trans-atlantic interests meet. What is now commonly known under the concept of European neighbourhood starts right on our borders and we are also neighbouring the region of the Western Balkans.

This geopolitical and geo-strategic position outlines a very specific profile for my country and poses specific security issues. But *Romania's offer for Europe goes far beyond this geography. It is about the project we can imagine and implement together with EU members, it is about our expertise in dealing with regional security concerns, as it is about our good neighbourliness relation and our contribution to further promote European values and patterns in the Balkans, in the Black Sea area and beyond.*

We have gradually become aware of our neighbours' interest in being more functionally connected to the European area, as we have a good expertise on their political, economic, cultural capabilities in this respect. We certainly do not build walls, but bridges. We have acquired a balanced sense of the past, a clearer understanding of how we can recover from it the foundations for a better future.

Our presence in the EU proximity is the best contribution we can make to the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Security and Defence Policy. But how would this be manageable then? What could make Romania able to present an inventory of assets that can add up to an influentially distinct profile in Europe?

The first issue I would like to deal with is the *Black Sea Region*. This regions deeply needs the European democratic model, it deeply needs an increased awareness and attention from Europe and the international community. It is too close to Europe for Europe to ignore it.

The Black Sea is a forcible neighbour, it is a special neighbor of Romania and Bulgaria; it is a source of insecurity and asymmetric risks; it is a "refrigerator" of conflicts". If we will fail to implement a wise policy in the region, we might be faced with crisis. *The Black Sea region should not remain a Romanian obsession, instead we believe it should become a permanent issue on the European agenda.* In this respect Romania plans to organize at the beginning of this summer a Summit to launch an initiative under which a Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership should be established, providing the countries of the region, in the widest sense, with a flexible, non-institutionalized platform for increasing exchange and cooperation in this vital area for European stability and, more and more, energetic security.

At a time when *Germany* and other European states are eagerly looking for new solutions with regard to diversifying their energy supplies, the Black Sea region, linking the Caspian Sea with Western Europe, should be taken into account as part of the possible solutions. Involving Western partners in a more sustainable economic development of the region, mainly by attracting Western investment in the energy sector development, and expanding East-West energy corridors, facilitating transfer of the Caspian Energy sources towards Western Europe and the open sea are very important to the project.

We approach the Black Sea region in tight connection with the European Neighbourhood Policy. The implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy priorities and the continuation and assessment of the Action Plans currently underway are directions we will continue to support.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Enlargement is one of the EU's most powerful policy tools. Its benefits are obvious.

I dare say that Europe should be proud of the force of fascination that it possesses and it should not oppose reluctance to the nations which look at it full of hope. *This fascination is exerted by the European model which lies at the core of the entire architecture of the Union. A model where the economic and social dimensions are aptly intertwined and supported by the dimension of democracy. This force of fascination of the European model was and continues to be the best engine for transformation and reform for all nations from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.* This engine should be used wisely to help these nations progress and “Europeanize” and by saying this I mean internalizing more and more the European model, I dare say “the European way of life”. The Romanian experience shows that European integration can successfully evolve from a top foreign policy goal to a strategic government priority and a vector of social modernization and be embraced lastingly by a large majority of the population.

Similarly, the European perspective has helped stabilize the political situation in the Eastern Adriatic or, as it is better known, the *Western Balkans*. The developments leading to the welcome opening of negotiations with Croatia on 3 October illustrate the value of this approach. The Balkan countries are resolving outstanding border disputes at the negotiating table. Further East and South, the EU is also exerting this persuasive power, providing a clear example of the benefits of democracy, and supporting and providing incentives for those who choose democratic reform. The Orange and Rose revolutions have once again seen citizens reject oppression and demand the opportunity to follow the European path. By its very existence, the enlarging EU has facilitated change. But we must also go further, developing the depth of engagement and credibility of commitment needed to ensure we can support long term sustainable reform, whether in the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, in the Caucasus, in the countries south of the Mediterranean or even further afield.

Of course, enlargement of the EU can not comprise the whole world, but I think that Europe is lucky not having clear boundaries already set. This is a strong incentive for all its neighbors who should know that if they stay engaged on the path of reform the perspective of developing structured ties with the EU to the benefit of their peoples and their economies is a graspable perspective which will nurture new realities. This should not prevent the Union from clearly setting its priorities and from managing enlargement so as not to overstretch its capacities. But it needs vision, it needs strategy, it needs reformed institutions.

We are certainly aware that there also is *concern, voiced about continued enlargement* and it should not be downplayed. Any political strategy for improving Europe's legitimacy must take this concern into account. But it is imperative that European leaders make the case for

enlargement and speak out in support of the strategic realities. *German statesmen have always been frontrunners of advocating the benefits of a united Europe and, inspite of ups and downs in Euro-enthusiasm, they more than once managed to take along even reluctant politicians but also the public opinion. In Romania we are confident that this will again be the case in the current climate where Euro-skepticism fights Euro-enthusiasm with unconvincing but very loudly rattling sables.*

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Europe faces an important and testing period over the months to come. It has taken a timely and historic step by enlargement with 10 new member states. But the outcome of the reflexion phase on the EU Constitution will be an important test of Europe's ability to respond to change and pursue its objectives in a way relevant to the challenges of the 21st century. In this event, the case for an outward-looking Global Europe will be clear.

Whether politically, economically, in foreign or trade policy, or just in the way we think about ourselves, *Europe must respond – and often is beginning to do so – to the powerful agent of change and solvent of tradition constituted by globalization.* Only by doing so can Europe build the support it needs to succeed within a new generation of European citizens. And this is my point here: it is the task of pro-Europeans, and Romanians are among the stronger advocates of Europe, to make these points publicly and to win the argument. *In the last 15 years Romania succeeded to move forward from its 50 years communist past. This should encourage the EU Member States to face up to today's challenges, and win the argument for a prosperous, effective, and globally-oriented Europe.*

At the beginning of this year one of the big and influential German foundations published a paper providing European citizens, and above all Germans with solid arguments in favor of the benefits which membership in the European Union entail. It is sad to notice that only a couple of days ago the latest Eurobarometer justified the need for such an undertaking. But I say - all the arguments presented in this enlightening document are our arguments as well. However I should point out that we could and do use them not so much to convince our own citizens, but to instill some more enthusiasm vis-à-vis our belonging together with you and the other member countries to the European Union. Talking of Euro-enthusiasm this is for certain an asset – immaterial it may be, but nevertheless extremely precious - that Romania will bring along in large quantities when it will join because we really believe that *Europe is worth it!*¹

Let me conclude by saying that I believe there could hardly be a more telling political and historical symbolism than having the 5th wave of enlargement completed with Romania and Bulgaria under the EU Council Presidency of Germany, the country which, by its reunification, opened and paved the way for the reunification of Europe as a whole.

Thank you!

¹ Title of the document published by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and signed Elmar Brok and Frank Sauer „Europa rechnet sich!“ (KAS, January 9,2006)