



**Institutul „Ovidiu Șincai“**

București, str. Atena nr. 11, sector 1

Tel. 230.24.34, 230.24.74, fax: 231.55.23, site: [www.fisd.ro](http://www.fisd.ro), e-mail: [isd@rdsmail.ro](mailto:isd@rdsmail.ro)

---

## **Political Analysis Report**

# **The 7 June European Elections – The Twilight of Democracy?**

**Bucharest**

**June 2009**

# **Contents**

## **I. International and domestic context**

## **II. Preparation and evolution of the elections**

1. Legal framework. Organising the elections
2. Electoral strategies, human resources, political offers
  - a) Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L)
  - b) Social Democratic Party (The PSD+PC Alliance)
  - c) National Liberal Party (PNL)
  - d) Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)
  - e) Greater Romania Party (PRM)
  - f) Independent candidates
3. The role of mass media

## **III. Results: explanations and political significance**

- a) Official statistics
- b) Electoral turnout
- c) PD-L – the decline continues
- d) PSD – the reduction and shift in electoral core
- e) PNL – a party adrift?
- f) UDMR – the success of minority discipline
- g) PRM – resurrection of the ghosts
- h) Elena Băsescu – the triumph of hypocrisy

## **IV. Romanian results in the European context**

### **Conclusions**

### **Recommendations**

*7 June 2009 is a symbolic moment for Romanians because they are now synchronized with the rest of the European Union citizens. The 4-7 June elections for the European Parliament have provided more than 375 million voters with the opportunity or the requirement (Belgium and Greece) to vote for the 736 politicians who will represent their countries in the European Parliament. The 7 June elections in Romania have also been a barometer for the political state of the Romanian nation during the economic crisis.*

*The "Ovidiu Șincai" Institute, continuing its efforts to offer an evaluation of important events in Romania and the world to those concerned, intends to contribute through the following report to the understanding of the development of the elections for the European Parliament in Romania, their significance in a European context, as well as offer a series of recommendations for strengthening Romanian democracy.*

## **I. International and Domestic Context**

The elections for the European Parliament (EP) have taken place within an international and domestic context which can be understood through a series of important features:

- The economic crisis has global effects and the pessimism and worries about the future have enveloped a wide range of social categories. In the entire European Union general issues regarding the future of Europe, from an institutional perspective, have taken second place, the main political issue being the economic crisis, its consequences, as well as the measures to counteract its effects;
- The elections in Romania are one instance of the national elections which have taken place between 4 and 7 of June in the 27 Member States of the Union. Although in the year 2008 the main trans-national political groups were intending to organise unitary and synchronized electoral campaigns in all the states, this was not undergone, because the efficiency would have been lower, as the agenda of the debates shifted from the future of the European Union to the answer each national government would give to counteract the crisis. Fundamentally, the elections for the EP were not a battle between left, represented by the Party of European Socialists, and the right, represented by the European People's Party. Voters from the 27 states have chosen according to the particular situation of every country, according to the balance between power and opposition parties. Significantly, one of the most important missions of the new EP, voting the new Commission, has no longer been an issue of conflict as it was thought previously, because the acting president, Jose Barroso, had already received the backing of his party (EEP-ED) and other important left-wing parties (e.g. the German social-democrats, the Spanish socialists, as well as the British Labour) during the campaign. Consequently, the Party of European Socialists' effort to transform the European elections into a race between left and right was not received enthusiastically at the national level;
- In just two years (May 2007-June 2009) the Romanian citizens were called to cast their ballots five times, this frequency of popular consultation being a novelty in the recent Romanian history. The tendency regarding voter turnout

has been a descendant one, regardless of the type of elections. Reasons for this situation will be discussed throughout our analysis;

- Given the information regarding the global effects of the economic crisis and its direct consequences for the Romanian economy, Romanian voters' attitudes towards the political parties and their electoral promises has become quite flexible, of relative understanding for the unresolved promises which were made during the campaign for the general elections in 2008. This is underlined by the fact that, although great social tensions were expected, as a result of the economic crisis, this did not happen, the citizens being at peace with the reality of the economic crisis;
- Undergoing a great coalition government between PD-L and PSD has created a new political situation for Romania. The Emil Boc government is supported by 70% of the Parliament, however, from a communicational point of view, there is a perception of two opposition wings: an official one, constituted by PNL and UDMR, and an unofficial one, which includes some leaders of PSD, unhappy because of the decisions imposed by Traian Băsescu through Emil Boc;
- If, at the beginning of 2009, the official statements of PD-L and PSD announced a long-term engagement to maintain the "Partnership for Romania", step by step, once the tensions between the two governing parties began to show, a fact which was obvious from the formation of the Boc Cabinet became publicly recognized: the fate of this Cabinet depends on the result of the presidential elections. If Traian Băsescu would win a new mandate as head of state, Emil Boc might probably continue as the leader of a presidentialised Cabinet; if, on the contrary, a different candidate would win negotiations would be resumed for a new governmental majority. Under these conditions, the parties have approached the European elections not as an event in itself, but as a final test before the presidential elections. Consequently, in one way or another, the stars of this campaign were the candidates for the Romanian presidency;
- The campaign for the national parliament has underlined the bankruptcy of the "civil society", involving NGOs which function as pseudo-parties, assuming a role of "moral guardians of the nation". The pro-Băsescu intelligentsia has become more and more isolated in society, because its message is in harsh disagreement with reality and its partisans have proven, often, to be motivated not by a community of values, but by the receipt of well paid public offices.

## II. Preparation and evolution of the elections

### 1. Legal framework. Organising the elections

#### a) Legal framework

The legal framework regarding the development of the elections for the European Parliament on the 7 June 2009 is constituted by *Law no. 33/16 January 2007 regarding the organisation and unfolding of elections for the European Parliament*, completed by the *Emergency Decree no. 1/2007 regarding certain measures for the organisation and unfolding of the elections for the European Parliament*, by the *Emergency Decree no. 8/2007 modifying article IV of the Emergency Decree no. 1/2007 regarding certain measures for the organisation and unfolding of the elections for the European Parliament* and *article 92(1) of Law no. 33/16 January 2007 regarding the organisation and unfolding of elections for the European Parliament*, by the *Emergency Decree no. 84/2007 to modify and complement Law no. 33/16 January 2007 regarding the organisation and unfolding of elections for the European Parliament, the modification of art IV (6) of Emergency Decree no. 1/2007 regarding certain measures for the organisation and unfolding of the elections for the European Parliament and complements article 3 of Emergency Decree no. 15/2007 regarding certain measures for electing the Romanian representatives to the European Parliament in the year 2007*, by the *Emergency Decree no. 11/2009 to modify and complement Law no. 33/16 January 2007 regarding the organisation and unfolding of elections for the European Parliament*, by the *Government Decree no. 216/2009 regarding the establishment of a reference day for the election of the Romanian representatives for the European Parliament in the year 2009*, by the *Law 144/2007 regarding the foundation, organisation and functioning of the National Agency for Integrity*, by *Law no. 94/2008 regarding the approbation of Emergency Decree no. 49/2007 to modify and complement Law no. 144/2007 regarding the foundation, organisation and functioning of the National Agency for Integrity*, by *Law no. 115/1996 regarding the declaration and control of public officers' wealth*, by *Law no. 161/2003 regarding certain measures for the assurance of transparency in the exercising of public offices, public functions as well as for the business environment, the prevention and sanction of corruption*, by *Law no. 293/2008 for the approbation of Emergency Decree no. 24/2008 regarding the access to one's own file and the uncovering of the former Securitate*, by *Law 14/2003 regarding political parties*, by *Law no. 334/2006 regarding the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns*, by *Law no. 35/2008 for the election of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate and to modify and complement Law no. 67/2004 for the election of local administration authorities, the Local Public Administration Law no. 215/2001 and Law no. 393/2004 regarding the Status of local elected representatives*, as well as by other 14 Government Decrees, 13 Emergency Decrees, one Decree rectification, and the *Decision of the National Audiovisual Board no. 391/2009 regarding the guidelines for the unfolding of the electoral campaign for the election of Romanian representatives to the European Parliament*.

Law no. 33/16 January 2007 has introduced, for the first time in Romania, the term *communitarian voter*, which is applicable for the citizens of the member states of the European Union with domicile or residence in Romania, as well as the term *eligible communitarian*, allowing the above mentioned citizens of the EU to be elected in the

European Parliament. The law provides a series of non-eligible categories, such as Constitutional Court judges, Ombudsman, magistrates, active members of the Army, policemen and other categories of public servants, including those with a special status. At the same time, the incompatibility between MEP and MP, senator and member of Government is established.

In order to avoid multiple voting or double candidature, Law no. 33 contains a series of measures which require communitarian voters and Romanian citizens in other member states to take responsibility before the law and also the collaboration between the Permanent Electoral Authority and similar authorities from other member states. As regards the unfolding of the elections, the system remains the same: party list with an electoral threshold of 5% for political parties and 3.03% for independent candidates (Art. 20)

Completing the organisation framework for the elections, the Government has adopted decrees and decisions regarding a number of measures which assure the harmonious unfolding of the event. These added to the responsibilities of the Permanent Electoral Authority, which now has the right to change the polling stations' presidents as needed and can also change the date of the elections if a major problem should occur during the electoral process. At the same time, problems such as the declaration and control of candidates' wealth, establishing the Registry for declarations of interests, uncovering the former *Securitate* as political police, financing political parties and the electoral campaign, accreditation of external observers and external representatives of the mass media, the model request for independent candidature were all strictly regulated.

On the basis of this electoral legislation, 18.318 polling stations were organised, 18.128 of which in Romania and the rest abroad.

#### b) The organisation of elections

The European elections on 7 June 2009 have marked a novelty in the electoral history of Romania since 1989. For the first time, all political parties involved have contested the organisation and certain illicit practices the political adversaries used.

Consequently, after the election, the Central Electoral Bureau received 18 litigations: 5 from each party PSD+PC and PD-L, 4 from PNL, one from each of PRM and PNȚCD and 2 from other persons. The litigations regarded the activity of certain members from polling stations, the offering of electoral bribes, electoral materials near the polling stations, candidates' access to the polling stations and introducing additional votes into the ballots. The Central Electoral Bureau has considered that these questions have not been of nature to influence the general results of the elections and has dismissed all the litigations.

Furthermore, on the Election Day evidence was given for no less than 269 events, which were of nature to disturb the electoral process. These referred especially to cases of electoral tourism which caused a high number of accusations that a multiple vote had taken place. In 45 of the cases the police prepared criminal case files. Also, there were 54 infractions and 40 contraventions, which were fined with a total of 34,950 lei.

From a statistic perspective, it is worth mentioning a few aspects:

- The number of voters registered fell from 18,464,274, on 30 November 2008, to 18,197,316, on 7 June 2009, which is a decrease of 266,958 voters in seven

- months. Taking into account the mortality rate in Romania for 2008, 11.84 to 1000 inhabitants, the decrease in voting population is quite significant;
- Of the total votes cast (5,035,297), 194,621 were annulled, a percentage of 3.87%. If we are to compare this percentage to that from the last elections, we will notice that it is lower than the one for the European elections in 2007, 4.59%, but higher than the one for the legislative elections in 2008, 2.51%;
  - The number of voters on additional lists was fairly high: no less than 668,217 citizens chose to vote this way. This number represents 13.27% of all cast votes. For the European elections of 2007, the number of voters on the additional lists was 604,706, 11.26% of the total votes cast. This fact suggests that the existing framework is favourable for electoral tourism and, therefore, electoral fraud.

## **2. Electoral strategies, human resources, political offers**

### **a) Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L)**

As a main ruling party, PD-L has set its strategic target to win the European elections as a first step for Traian Băsescu to win a new mandate as president. Having the function of prime-minister, PD-L could no longer convincingly play the traditional role of the 1996-2000 and 2004-2007 government, of inside critic, and has adopted the strategy of maximising responsibility towards the act of governing. This strategy was constructed at the Cotroceni Palace and it entailed several pillars: a) maintaining the suspense regarding the official candidature of Traian Băsescu, in order to create the perception of a responsible political figure; this also aimed to erase Traian Băsescu's image as a conflicting political figure, strengthened by the conflicts with prime-minister Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu; b) PD-L should avoid attacking its government partners in a direct manner, especially PSD ministers, and project the image of a government preoccupied by the countries' difficult problems, and not of a bickering and divided coalition; c) from a communicational point of view PD-L has constructed its electoral message on the basis of two values: solidarity and responsibility (its slogan was "PD-L for Better or Worse"), trying, at the same time, to separate itself from the behaviour of the social democratic leaders, who have criticised the current power, although PSD is also a ruling party.

The PD-L list of candidates has emphasized the rapid and artificial growth of the party, because the quality of its human resources remains problematic. While the main leaders of the party can be found either in the central or local administration, the list of candidates includes relatively unknown people without a national, much less European, political experience. First on the list was Theodor Stolojan, in an attempt at using whatever is left of the technocratic myth. Positions 2-4 are occupied by persons from the so-called "civil society" (Monica Macovei, Traian Radu Ungureanu, Cristian Preda) who have distinguished themselves through the relentless defence and justification of president Traian Băsescu's most exotic attitudes. Bringing to the foreground candidates who have no formal link to the party, but who are loyal to Traian Băsescu, is another step taken by the current president towards the changing of the "old guard" of PD-L through alienating traditional leaders and replacing them with members of the party whose main merit is their fidelity towards the leader. This team transferred from "civil society" to PD-L is meant to strengthen the force of the group which has been in the presidential party

for a long time and has become known through messages of extreme obedience toward the *de facto* leader of the party. Furthermore, this group can be easily identified by the constant public support they have showed to Elena Băsescu, the president's daughter.

PD-L's electoral programme was not built upon the current or future competencies the EP shall have if the Lisbon Treaty enters into action, but according to issues considered to be priorities in the Romanian population's perception of the European Union (for example, "improving the justice system", "adopting the Euro"). The electoral offer called "Romania's exit from the crisis" is not the substance of PD-L's electoral campaign, but Government actions. Prime-minister Boc and PD-L's ministers were the main electoral agents during the campaign. The issues which transferred credibility from the Government to the party were: *the salaries without privileges law*, *the reform of the pension system*, *the decentralisation law* and so on.

If it included European issues (opening of the labour markets, recognition of diplomas, civil right for Romanians in the EU Member States, the perspective of entering the Schengen space or the Euro zone), PD-L's electoral statement was situated much to the left by comparison to that of EPP (the European party where the members of the EP from PD-L will act). This shift has made their "European" rhetoric very similar to that of PSD and PES. This has created confusion among the voters. This statement is justified not only through the leaders' populism, but, furthermore, reflects the survival of left-wing reflexes, which can be explained if we look at the origins of the party and its experience as member of the Socialist International. We can estimate, thus, a problem regarding the accommodation of PD-L to the EPP politics and certain heterogeneity within this parliamentary group in the EP. If we take into account the fact that PD-L is the seventh national group within the EPP Group, though it has taken eleventh place as electoral results and has before it parties which have won their national elections, we can estimate that, in the case of a difference of opinion, PD-L won't be able to change the EPP point of view, it will only so much as block actions considered to be contrary to the Romanian expectations regarding Europe.

During the last part of the campaign PD-L has tried to use the "secret weapon", Monica Macovei, who launched systematic attacks against certain PSD leaders on the issue of corruption. Also, Cristian Preda and Traian Radu Ungureanu have tried to capture the interest of PD-L's electoral core through attacks against PSD and PNL.

From an organisation point of view, we can assert that the campaign was unitary, centrally coordinated and the outdoor campaign was identical throughout the country. Unlike the elections for the European Parliament on the 25 November 2007, when Traian Băsescu played the role of "head teacher", being a part of the electoral sign, along with members of the Democratic Party (PD), during the campaign for the recent elections the head of state has adopted an apparently neutral conduct, of declared non-participation in the competition. However, Traian Băsescu has found reasons to campaign for PD-L all throughout this period, taking part in popular events next to leaders and candidates of the presidential party. Also, during the last week of campaign he has visited the Romanian soldiers in Iraq and Afganistan, announcing the end of the Romanian mission in the Gulf.

## **b) Social Democratic Party (The PSD+PC Alliance)**

For the social democrats the European elections have been an event which raised multiple challenges. Mainly, PSD was conscious of its secondary position in the governing process, as well as the risk of being eliminated at any time from Government according to the model set up by Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu in the year 2007 in his relation to PD. This is the reason why the European elections had the purpose of consolidating the social democrats' position and raise their margin within the governmental team. In this sense the campaign has proven the insufficiency of political cohesion factors of the current ruling coalition. On the other hand, the elections on 7 June were considered a test for the relationship between social democrats and their followers, a relationship which was strained by the party's participation in a Government lead *de facto* by Traian Băsescu. Last, but not least, achieving a positive result in the elections was regarded as the opportunity to consolidate PSD's position within the European left.

For Mircea Geoană, as PSD candidate for the presidential elections, the 7 June elections have been a subsidiary, a test for the direct competition with Crin Antonescu to go into the second round of the presidential elections, being a known fact that the social democratic leader was systematically rated under the party score in every opinion poll.

PSD's strategy for the European elections had three main directions: a) using Mircea Geoană as main message vector, in the perspective of the presidential elections; b) using the party's human resources, mainly the EP candidates; c) capitalising on the activist networks on the local level, in order to achieve the best mobilisation for PSD's electoral core.

Regarding human resources, PSD has used the strategy of continuity, the first seven candidates being MEPs in office. The first on the list was Adrian Severin, his positive image being used also in the outdoor campaign of PSD. In Bucharest PSD+PC mayors of sectors were used (Marian Vanghelie, Cristian Popescu-Piedone, Neculai Onțanu) in the European campaign, promoting the message: "We need people like Severin."

PSD has build a political offer inspired by the 2009 Manifesto of the Party of European Socialists, which included only projects within the competency of the European Parliament. Next to this offer, which was more technical and harder to explain to voters without a vast experience or a mature European conception, and which was used by candidates to emphasize their superiority in matters of European expertise, there were proposals and issues resulting from PSD's quality of ruling party: *reviving agriculture through European funds; supporting small and medium industries; constructing 50,000 housing facilities and so on*. The national slogan for PSD was "Choose well!" and it was inspired by "Live well!", a slogan used by the PNL-PD Alliance in the year 2004. By comparison to the electoral messages from other democratic parties in the competition (PD-L and PNL), PSD's statement was the only one in sync with that of the European political family it is part of and within which its members of the EP will act. For this reason, we can anticipate the integration of PSD in the future PES Group will be easy, and, because the two have common priorities and approaches, PSD will be able to significantly influence PES from the inside, by consolidating and accelerating policies which are in conformity with Romanian expectations regarding the European Union. If Romanian parties had a European programme for this campaign, then PSD would be the most likely to achieve its goals and keep its electoral promises. This does not mean that

these promises will definitely be fulfilled, but that its actions in the EP will be in conformity with the programme put forward to the public during the campaign.

Although a coordination of the campaign from the central level was sketched, it had a more logistic character, lacking in strategic thinking and adequate tactical planning. PSD candidates had, as a result, a great freedom in programming their campaign activities, each of them acting, mainly, in the geographic area from which they originate. The main common activities of PSD candidates were the national launch, as well as their presentations at regional level, especially at the events linked to a “presidential pre-campaign”.

We identify three electoral sub-campaigns for PSD. The first, and most visible, was that preparing the presidential elections, which had Mircea Geoană in the forefront, and included some of PSD’s ministers. Regarding these ministers we must emphasize the fact that, according to press monitors, they were less visible than their PD-L counterparts. The main issues which came from the Romanian Government during the month of May were presented by Emil Boc and PD-L ministers (*the “First Home” programme, the opening of the vacation season, projects regarding infrastructure*). The thematic content of the presidential pre-campaign was only linked to European issues in a secondary manner, the main strategic direction Mircea Geoană proposed was to offer an authentic opposition to Traian Băsescu, using negative subjects, which are specific for the delimitation of opponents stage. In a large part, this objective has been reached, especially because of the disappointing weakness of the PNL presidential candidate. Mircea Geoană truly has shaped himself into a real alternative to the acting President. It is very possible that this strategic success has come at the expense of a few percents lost for the party in the European elections. There is a problem regarding the perspective of reheating the presidential campaign in the fall, after its over-heating during the campaign for the European elections and the cool-down during the summer. Such an operation (including a non-ostentatious but effective summer persuasion, especially on a subliminal level) will demand, in its continuation, a great strategic craftsmanship and perfect tactical discipline.

The second sub-campaign is that undergone by candidates in the elections, mainly the former members of the EP. With a few exceptions, PSD candidates were not visible on central mass media, but they were well represented in local press. Candidates for the EP, with the local organizations which offered support, have tried to develop an electoral campaign about European issues (*the development of local communities; the need to change the Common Agricultural Policy; adopting measures against the crisis at European level*). In what regards the field campaign, PSD may have had the best representation. Emphasizing their European competence, PSD statements can be evaluated as being 90% dedicated to European issues, 5% to national issues related to Europe (European funds’ absorption, a lack of administrative capacity, justice reform) and only 5% other subjects linked to the domestic political battle. The empiric research of the most Euro-centric campaign (that of the PSD candidates) has led to the conclusion that European issues are neither inaccessible nor do they lack interest for Romanians. Also, it has been proven that the respective subjects can be approached with real success in the urban and rural environments. The explanation for this fact resides in Romania’s structural euro-dependence as a Member State with a lower development level. In this context, the best environments for such a debate are not the rural areas, but the areas

which have benefited from EU financed projects, especially those where a part of community has gone to work or study in other countries of the European Union. It is a paradox that a high level of information about the EU was observed in underdeveloped locations where the existential difficulties have generated a migration of the domestic labour force outside of Romania. In this context, it is not surprising that issues such as the efficiency of European institutions (their capacity to protect Romanians outside the country), neighbourhood and enlargement policies (regarding ways to save work places through exports to eastern neighbours such as the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia), deepening of European integration (linked to decisions about social policies and integrated European infrastructure, including agricultural infrastructure), reform of the agricultural and environment policies (including references to investment in irrigation systems and regulation of water courses) etc. were approached with success.

The statistic research tends to confirm the empiric research. Where the field campaign was intensely orientated towards European discussion with candidates known for their expertise on the subject, PSD has won the elections (previously lost to PD-L) or has definitely improved on previous scores. Such examples are Târgu Mureş, Olteniţa or Feteşti and a significant number of villages.

***Of course, without a massive coverage at national media level, direct communication on the field can only have limited results. They are, however, significant and they dismiss theories according to which an authentic European campaign is impossible or risky and irrelevant.***

Finally, the third sub-component of the national electoral campaign was of a technical nature, being in the charge of PSD's Secretariat General and has tried to mobilise voters of the party, organise the Election Day and the counting of votes. This organisational component was the main contribution of the central campaign team. In light of the demands of the future presidential campaign this appears insufficient. Without organisational mobilisation at central level, PSD results would, of course, have been less satisfying. With a different type of mobilisation – including the strategic component – they would certainly have been a few percent better. It would have had important consequences for PSD as far as its political weight on a domestic and European level. (3% more for PSD would have meant a clearer difference in the race for the presidency, while now it's a penalty shootout; with the same 3% PSD would have had a third place within the PES Group, ahead of the British Labour representatives and the French socialists, while now it occupies a much less spectacular fifth place).

### **c) National Liberal Party (PNL)**

The elections for the EP have represented for PNL an event with multiple connotations: a) the new leading team, Crin Antonescu – Ludovic Orban, had to prove that they could get better results than the Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu – Bogdan Olteanu team; b) PNL had to maintain the electorate it won as a result of participating in Government; c) the result of the elections would be used as a trampoline for presidential elections.

As far as human resources are concerned, PNL has gambled everything on continuity, places 2-5 being occupied by present members of the EP. First on the list was Norica Nicolai, a person with political notoriety, but a person that had previously lost a seat in the national parliament. It is important to mention that Daniel Dăianu, a former

member of the EP, whose expertise in the financial field is widely recognised and admired, was left outside of the party list. The reason: doctrinal incompatibility. A strong influence for this decision was, perhaps, the fact Daniel Dăianu was a technocrat, while PNL was engaged in a political battle which had the main aim of winning the European elections and consolidating the party as the main opposition force in Romania. Furthermore, clearly marking the right-wing identity of this force was far more important than promoting its technical competence.

The central message of PNL's campaign ("PNL. Money for Romanians. European Money.") tried to combine a fundamental need in moments of crisis ("money") with the idea of a party with European values (the formula "Europe is liberal" was used). The electoral programme was not built around the real responsibilities of the EP, but according to the expectations projected by the party's voters. During the campaign, PNL has used a combination of negative campaign, with attacks against the PD-L-PSD Government, and positive campaign (but still with an inside echo), centred around the problem of money (*cancelling the flat-rate tax, 10% flat tax and 15% VAT, reducing by 10% the contribution to social security and so on*). These domestic messages have given an impulse in defining a neo-liberal type alternative to the current Government, in a moment when, under pressure from the financial-economic crisis, neo-liberalism, abandoned a long time ago by European liberals, is about to be rejected by parties in the Christian-democratic and conservative families. Through these, beyond the excessive nationalisation of the message, PNL has placed itself, whether it was through domestic or European statements, much to the right of the European family it is part of. This shift leads us to similar conclusions with regard to the relationship between PNL and ALDE as with the one between PD-L and EPP. ***If we take into account the fact that PNL and PD-L both belong to the so-called Romanian right-wing (UDMR, although it has claims to be to the right, remains an ethnic party with an uncertain ideological identity) we reach the conclusion that the entire right-wing in Romania is uncoupled with the European right from an ideological point of view. In the EP the marriage between Romanian and European right-wings (ideologically dominated by the Christian-democrats and the German social-Christians) will be, consequently, one of (political) interest. Romania remains connected, from a political ideology point of view, to Europe exclusively through PSD while the social democratic, socialist and labour left-wing, entirely, has suffered significant recoil.***

The main strategic idea of PNL, except for the total and permanent attack against the PD-L – PSD government, was that of achieving a transfer of sympathy from Crin Antonescu towards the list of candidates, and for this a large outdoor campaign was organised at the national level. Next to the outdoor campaign of the party leader with the main candidates, PNL has staked much on the electoral tour of Crin Antonescu, the actions being conceptualised as a pre-campaign stage in the presidential competition.

Because PNL has become an opposition party, the new generation of leaders have relied on the protest vote against the ruling forces. Complementary, in order to give credibility to his message, Crin Antonescu has distanced himself from a series of decisions of the Tăriceanu Government. Such a political rebellion (distancing one's self from all recent governments, including that of one's own party) is all that is left of the traditional air which attracted past sympathy for the current PNL leader. He has maintained, however, within the limits of a responsible discourse, avoiding dissonant

anti-system populism characteristic for PD-L (when it is not governing or in first place in government) but most of all for its leader, Traian Băsescu. Precisely such a sobriety in the substance of the message (fitting but not specific for the speaker), cumulated with the perception regarding the frivolity of rhetoric (sympathetic but non-presidential) have drastically reduced authenticity and, consequently, the credibility of the liberal candidate for Romania's presidency.

#### **d) Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)**

The European elections equation was solved by UDMR even before the start of the campaign, because the main danger would have been missing the electoral threshold of 5% if the Hungarian electorate were to split like in 2007. The agreement between the Union and Laszlo Tokes, through which the former received the first position on the list, has extinguished the potential sources of public tension. The second position was taken by a representative of the moderate wing, Iuliu Winkler.

From an ideological perspective, UDMR's electoral campaign did not propose anything new, around the idea of solidarity (the slogan was "Hungarian solidarity") being promoted the old theses of cultural and territorial autonomy, respectively conserving cultural identity. Candidates with radical views, Laszlo Tokes and Csaba Sogor (third place), had radical messages to deliver on the issue of imposing Hungarian as the second official language, if not at the national level, then at least in Transylvania.

The main objective of UDMR's campaign was to mobilise as many voters as possible so that, in the context of large absenteeism, they may gain 3 seats in the EP, and for this the candidates and leaders of the Union have started electoral caravans in the Hungarian communities.

It is worth looking at the double message of UDMR. On one side, its European leaders (usually named, probably, inappropriately "moderate") even as they talked about domestic problems have let it be understood that the captive electorate of this party has interests in the openness and solidarity which are specific for the foundation concept of the EU. On the other side, there are the "retrograde" leaders (usually called "radicals") who have had an ethno-centric message and have promised their voters that through the EU they will gain territorial autonomy on the ethno-cultural criteria, when in fact the true nature of the EU is to transcend the Westphalian ties between territory and culture, allowing, through the spiritualization of political frontiers, for the unification of cultural nations without affecting the coherence and unity of European civic nations and removing cultural identity as a factor of political and military conflict. Without entering here into the analysis of territorial autonomy based on ethnic criteria project, we limit ourselves to saying that this subject can be approached on the national level and not at the level of the European Union (and not during European elections) because between the two there is an essential opposition regarding goals: territorial-ethnic autonomy proposes the regionalisation of the European Union through the segregation of ethno-cultural communities, through the re-drawing of old feudal frontiers, while European federalism proposes the Europeanization of regions through the spiritualization of political frontiers of modern nation-states. This dualist conception in UDMR's campaign probably explains why the leader of the list seldom appeared in the national (central) public debate while his discourse was only heard locally, without reverberations in the national press. While the general public message has tried to answer the Hungarian community's European

existential interests, the local message has taken into account the Romanian identity issues of the Hungarian community in Romania.

In the immediate scope of the European elections this double language and message has caused only a small part of the Hungarian community to vote in favour of the main democratic parties (founded on ideological bases), UDMR's excellent score being the result of the relative discipline of its captive electorate by comparison to the indiscipline of other parties' voters, and not the consequence of the unity in electoral options of the Hungarian community. In the context of the European elections certain members of national minorities considered that the democratic parties serve their European interests better than their ethnic party. This phenomenon would have been even clearer if the other parties would have presented a clearer European message, which would have included directly national minorities. On the other hand, in a further post-electoral design, there will be difficulties in integrating UDMR's sub-group within the EPP, because of the heterogeneity in thinking and approach. It must not be forgotten that Laszlo Tokes was not accepted for the last term in the EPP and his discourse in the EP was considered as belonging to the nationalist radical anti-European current. From this perspective it can be said that the seats won by radical *ethnocrats* from UDMR's list are lost seats for the European citizens of Romania, regardless of their ethnicity.

#### **e) Greater Romania Party (PRM)**

The failure of the rightful representative of national-populism in Romania to enter the European Parliament in the 2007 elections, and also in the national parliament in 2008 has left deep marks over PRM. The party led by Vadim Tudor was at the beginning of 2009 a political actor lacking in vitality, with no electoral and, also, financial support with an ever diminishing basis of militants, most of them middle-aged or older. In the month of April, however, the controversial arrest of George Becali, president of the New Generation Party and owner of Steaua Football Club, became headline. Under the conditions of a large media exposure of George Becali, who was imprisoned, Corneliu Vadim Tudor has obtained his older rival's acceptance to be the second place on PRM's list for the European elections. This way, PRM has recaptured the public's attention.

PRM did not undergo a traditional electoral campaign, its entire strategy being to attract electoral support as a result of the public's sympathy towards George Becali. PRM's message continued to be a populist one about justice, European issues being completely absent. The slogans, used in the outdoor campaign, achieved with minimal resources, were "Two Christian and Patriots will Rid the Country of Thieves" and "Do you want to be rid of scoundrels? Vote Vadim and Becali". Lacking human resources, PRM did not undergo an electoral campaign based on direct contact with the voters, but put its trust in the marginal media exposure of the two candidates: C.V. Tudor and George Becali.

The uncontested national-populism of the elected candidates from PRM's list is, just as the exclusivist ethno-centrism of the radicals elected on UDMR's list, outdated and in contradiction with the EU logic, with the essence of the European integration process. This is why the seats won by PRM members (and their votes) are wasted from the perspective of Romanian interests in Europe.

## **f) Independent candidates**

Two independent candidates have been able to join this electoral race, Elena Băsescu and Pavel Abraham.

President Traian Băsescu's daughter was only formally an independent candidate, because of her announcement after her resignation that she will rejoin the presidential party after the elections. The main campaign objective for Elena Băsescu was not to directly win votes, because she had behind her a well established PD-L mechanism through which the President's daughter was already offered a percentage of the party's votes, but to eliminate a potential vulnerable point in the presidential elections.

Elena Băsescu's electoral campaign was not built on the canons of an action for an authentic politician, but for a person heavily anchored in the fashion world. The campaign slogan was "Vote EBA, take action!" was meant to send the public the message that the President's daughter was not just a regular of fashionable locations and fashion shows, but she is genuinely involved in society. Either way, Elena Băsescu, has benefited from an over-exposure in the media, her presence in the electoral competition being considered quite exotic. As far as her outdoor campaign, it is important to notice the fact that it unfolded at a national level. Also, the real support level for this candidate is reflected in the donations received (approximately 100,000 Euro); more than UDMR and PRM received together.

Elena Băsescu's message has lacked content. This empty message was made to cause vibration, however, within the empty political conscience of those who have made auto-isolation from public life and society a way of life. It was, in conclusion, to be assumed that EBA has brought to the polls those who would have never voted otherwise (and would not have voted for the main parties, including PD-L) but who did not take action when voting (because they did not express a positive option through a conscious gesture). A new message was confirmed through a non-attitude vote. An anti-message has found its echo in an anti-attitude. This is why it is said (and we are probably dealing with an electoral calculation from PD-L strategists) that EBA has received votes from outside of PD-L's electorate (with the exception of votes transferred through the party machine in an illegal manner and those assured through the inevitable involvement of institutions and state officers), because PD-L would have lost votes from its supporters with EBA on the list, this being perceived as an act of nepotism. Consequently, the added score for PD-L may be better than it would have been with one list, but the political costs on a medium and long term are high. ***Especially under the conditions of moral, political and common law fraud being committed with imprudence and irrational ostentation, it is evident that the electoral and political prestige, domestically and internationally for PD-L and the father-President have suffered a hit which may prove to be fatal. For the European and Euro-Atlantic world, through the EBA phenomenon, Romania has entered into the despised group of dynastic republics. This is the supreme expression of a bankrupt system.***

The second independent candidate, General Pavel Abraham, ex-chief of staff in the Romanian Police, has participated in the competition without any real chances, lacking the logistic and financial resources necessary for a national campaign. His electoral campaign has had no real events and no strong messages. His slogan was "We have something to say in Europe. Now!"

### **3. The role of mass media**

In the entire European Union the press has paid little attention to European issues, being primarily interested in national or local issues. At the Commission and European Parliament level a large number of initiatives for increasing the communication capacity of European institutions were introduced, but despite these efforts, European issues have had a hard time being considered on the agenda of national press and, especially, of general use television channels, which have the largest audience.

The electoral campaign for the EP elections was not, consequently, more than the extension of a pathological situation which is known but which does not have a viable solution. In some cases it was a boycott from the television channels towards European elections. The most significant case is that of BBC, which refused to place a link on its website to the issue of the European elections, but has concentrated on the scandal regarding the illegal/immoral expense accounts of some members of the British Parliament. It should be noted that the European Parliament, knowing the difficulty in communicating European issues from the activity of European institutions, has promoted for these elections a number of advertising videos from the horror genre, hoping to catch the attention of viewers.

In Romania, a country with a diverse and relatively well developed media landscape, the authorities have established regulations regarding the access to public mass media. However, private mass media which dominate numerically, as well as from an audience point of view, have manifested a relative disinterest towards the electoral campaign for the EP. Parties and independent candidates have presented their electoral videos as advertising.

The most worrying aspect is the fact that there was no constant interest from journalists to make European issues attractive to the public. The situation could be explained by the fact that few journalists in Romania have the authority to approach such issues, as well as the fact that the main preoccupation was seeking sensational events, which contained a conflict, and could attract the attention of the public to the political show. This way, with the argument that private media have no social responsibility, their sole objective being to make profit, the informative and educational aspects were overlooked, or even eliminated, where they existed. Consequently, alongside the politicians, mass media have contributed to the establishment of a mechanism designed to keep citizens close to their television sets and away from the polling stations.

A sub-phenomenon is the inclination of mass media agents to criticise the way the campaign was conceived and undergone, when they should have encouraged the critical debate of European issues and political programs related to these issues. Because life did not offer sufficient subjects for such an approach, news were distorted. Therefore, in the same example category we find a short movie which reduced the campaign to a few grotesque scenes of PNL's President as he strives to answer a trick-question in approximate English and the head of state shaving sheep in a populist style, to which were added, what were actually innocent, scenes of PSD leaders playing with children in the park or arguing their points in front of voters. Projected many times each evening, this movie has induced the idea that the entire campaign is grotesque and risible. This is a false pretence.

By contrast to the central press we must place, however, the local press (written and electronic). This has proven a much higher degree of knowledge, involvement and

responsibility. Without the local press contribution (to which we should add the efforts of the national broadcasting stations) the campaign would have been a complete disaster as far as voter awareness and turnout.

Obviously, the press cannot be made responsible for the negative aspects of the campaign, before the politicians and civil society. It is not, however, without blame. In a modern and large society, the European idea cannot be explained and understood without the contribution of the media. On the other hand, the role to inform and explain cannot be left solely to politicians. This is why, as long as mass media fulfil a public interest activity, this activity should be monitored, just as other public interest activities are monitored.

### III. Results: Explanations and Political Meanings

#### a) Statistical Data

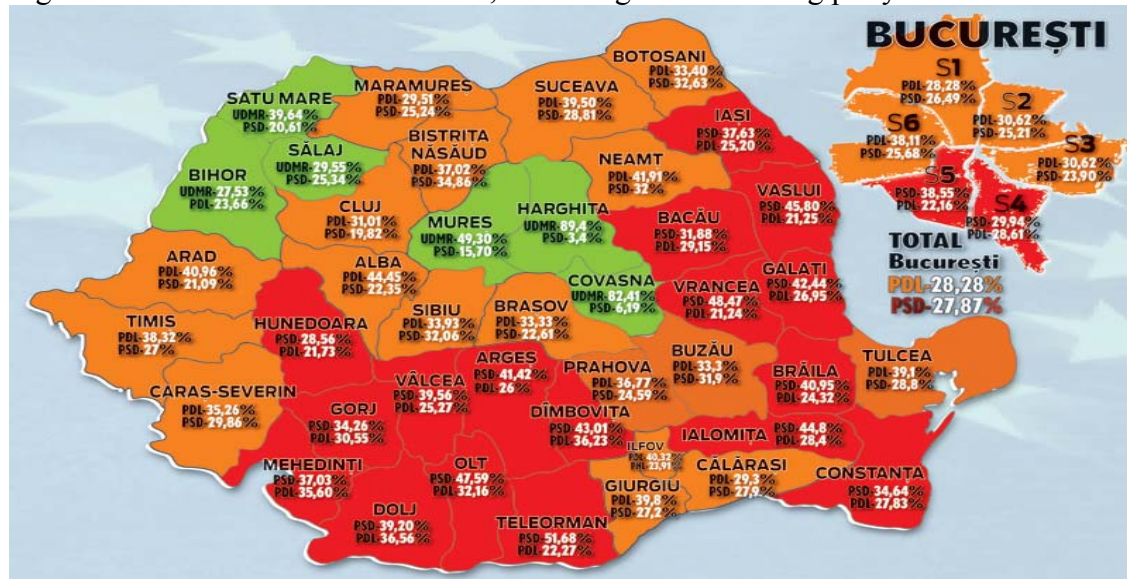
These are the results of the European elections for the political parties and independent candidates:

**Table 1:** Results of the European elections from 7<sup>th</sup> June 2009

No.	List / Candidate	Votes	Percentages	Mandate
1	PSD+PC Alliance	1,504,218	31.07%	11
2	Democratic Liberal Party	1,438,000	29.71%	10
3	National Liberal Party	702,974	14.52%	5
4	Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania	431,739	8.92%	3
5	Grater Romania Party	419,094	8.65%	3
6	Băsescu Elena	204,280	4.22%	1
7	PNȚCD	70,427	1.45%	-
8	Abraham Pavel	49,864	1.03%	-
9	Civic Force Party	19,436	0.40%	-

If we compare these elections with the last European elections, we can notice the following changes: PSD+PC Alliance obtained an additional mandate compared with 2007, PD-L obtained three mandates less than PD, and if we add the PLD (Liberal Democratic Party) result (which merged with PD, creating PD-L), then the loss is of six mandates; PNL got one mandate less compared with 25 November 2007; UDMR got an additional mandate compared with 2007; the main novelty is that PRM entered in the European Parliament, with three mandates; one independent candidate, Elena Basescu, entered in the EP like in 2007, when Laszlo Tokes was the independent candidate.

Figure 1: Counties' votes distribution, according to the winning party



Source: [www.cotidianul.ro](http://www.cotidianul.ro)

From the electoral statistic perspective, we can notice that PD-L won most votes in 18 counties and in 4 districts in Bucharest (see figure 1), PSD+PC Alliance obtained most votes in 17 counties and in 2 districts in Bucharest, and UDMR gained most votes in 6 counties. The other two parties entering the EP, PNL and PRM, didn't won in any county.

### **b) Electoral Turnout**

The analysis of the Romanian electoral turnout dynamic between 1990 and 2009 (see Figure 2) outlines an alarming reality: from 20 May 1990 until 7 June 2009 almost 60% of the Romanian voters chose not to participate to the electoral process. How can we explain this dramatic decrease of the Romanian voters' participation in the elections? Some explanations could clarify this important problem:

- For Romanians, since the general enthusiasm of the participation to the first free elections in 20 May 1990 politics has known a continuous "unappealing" process. In two decades of democracy, Romania knew, at least formally, four democratic alternations into power (1996, 2000, 2004, 2008) but this situation did not bring the expectations' rebirth through the virtues of politics, but conversely, strengthened the group of those who believe that, regardless of the doctrines affirmed, parties are identical. Many comparative studies show that Romanian citizens can be put in the same category with the Europeans that have the least confidence in Parliament and in political parties;

- In the category of the actors that are responsible for the reduction of the electoral turnout mass media can also be included. The media has constantly adopted not only a critical-conflicting attitude, but a delegitimizing attitude regarding political parties and politicians. Mass media's critical attitude towards political parties is normal for any democracy, but in a democratizing society critical message is often transformed in a caricature-like one, information is replaced with opinion, and the analysis with pamphlet style.

- The party system took the form of a partitocracy, which means that political parties are organized in oligarchic manner and the public interest is substituted with personal or group interest. In Romania, political parties are not concerned to strengthening their ties with the whole social body, and to manifest themselves actively through vote, but they are consuming a lot of energy only to preserve the bond with the electoral core, which is not important for itself, but for the fact that it facilitates the access to the public resources after elections. Hereby, the citizen's sense of uselessness transferred by the Romanian partitocracy has as direct reaction the rejection of politics, in other words absenteeism.

- Some citizens are not considering themselves dependent on political power and on state resources, so the disinterest for public manifestations is seen as a form of emancipation.

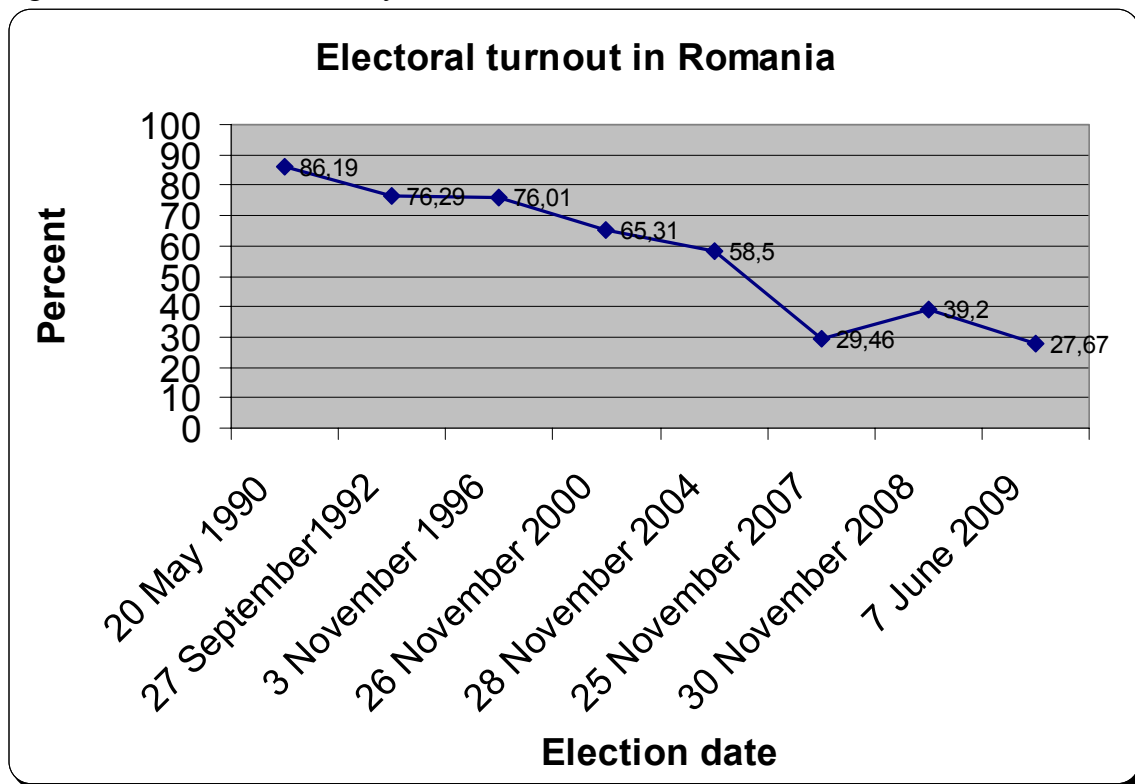
- The European elections are only a particular case of the electoral turnout descending trend. In the 7 June 2009 elections fewer voters participated than in the first European elections. A smaller presence at the European elections than in the parliamentary elections is a general European reality, which could be explained by the fact that the information regarding the role and activity of the European Parliament are insufficient and often ambiguous.

- The reduction of the turnout took place in the context in which approximately 2-2.5 millions of Romanian citizens are abroad and only a small part of them are participating in the electoral process.

- The most dramatic diminution of turnout occurred in urban areas, hence in those places in which access to mass media is the easiest. Conversely, in rural areas, where voting has not only a participative dimension, but a ritualistic one, participation has never known such a dramatic comedown as in the big cities. On 7 June the participation was 20.4% in urban areas and 36.56% in rural areas. This is the biggest gap between the rural and the urban areas in Romanian history. The lowest electoral turnout was in Bucharest (15.92%), Constanța (20.74%), Sibiu (21.08%), Iași (22.13%), Timiș (22.21%);

- The highest electoral turnout was in Teleorman (48.82%), Ilfov (41.31%), Harghita (40.87%), Mehedinți (40.7%), Sălaj (40.1%). We can notice that in the case of turnout above the national average, participation is influenced by the control of a political party over a county (Teleorman – PSD, Ilfov – PD-L), or by the Hungarian community mobilization (Harghita, Sălaj). Altogether, electoral turnout was higher in the counties with a smaller number of population, namely in those areas in which it was easier for the political parties’ apparatus to mobilize the electorate.

Figure 2: Electoral Turnout Dynamics: 1990-2009



### c) PD-L – the decline continues

Analyzing PD-L results raises a methodological problem: how much the votes obtained by the party reflect his quota of popularity and how many of the percentages were won because of the fact that the party has the physiognomy of a presidentialised party? The answer to that question lies in the electoral dynamic of the party, which points

out that PD made the jump from a medium size party to a large size party after the year 2004, when Traian Basescu won presidential elections. Hence, in PD-L's score we have to include all actors who are extracting their electoral sap from Traian Basescu's symbolic capital.

Traian Basescu had his maximum popularity moment during the impeachment referendum on 19 May 2007, when the suspended president of Romania obtained 6,059,315 votes, at a turnout of 44.45%. Afterwards, at the elections for the European Parliament on 25 November 2007, the two presidential parties (PD and PLD), officially in opposition, obtained together 1,875,006 votes, at a turnout of 29.46%. On 7 June 2009 from the summation of votes obtained by PD-L and Elena Basescu there are only 1,642,280 votes. Surely, there are cases of persons who voted for Elena Basescu, but who would vote neither for PD-L, nor for Traian Basescu, but those people are few (see below). From the data above we can conclude that Traian Basescu and his political actors are losing votes gradually, accordingly with the run out of the current President of Romania.

Such a conclusion is also stressed by the fact that PD-L, since parliamentary elections on 30 November 2008, had lost or couldn't mobilize 875,000 voters, and if we add also the votes obtained by Elena Basescu, then the loss still remains at 670,000 voters.

The electoral map of the European elections from 7 June 2009, following that of the 2008 local and parliamentary elections, indicates a series of tendencies of the PD-L electoral core:

- The loss of a part of voters from medium and large urban areas in three directions: a) conversion of voters into absentees; b) orientation towards PNL; c) orientation towards PSD (eloquent is the loss of presidential party supremacy in district 4 in Bucharest and the equal score between PSD and PD-L in Bucharest).
- The delimitation and attenuation of PD-L's dominance in northern Moldavia (Botoşani, Suceava, Neamţ), PSD ex-fiefs;
- The conservation of supremacy in western Romanian counties (Arad, Caraş-Severin, Timiş), based on PSD and PNL dislocation;
- The intromission in south-western (Oltenia) counties, reducing the gap separating them from social democrats;
- The massive intromission in rural areas and in small cities. PD-L percentage in rural areas was 33.8%, overtaking PSD, which had a quota of 32.9% in rural areas on 7 June elections. It is the first time in the history of the party when PD-L has more voters in rural areas than in towns. Subsequently, the share of lower education voters grew, so their number is approximately equal with those with higher education, according to the CCSB exit-poll results. This PD-L electoral base transformation can be also explained as a result of the populist and paternalist messages conveyed by president Traian Basescu in the last years. Thus PD-L takes over PSD's conservative electorate and transfers the modernist dynamic electorate which it was praising in the past.

PD-L's result, in good part, can be explained, besides of the sympathy transfer from Traian Basescu towards the party, through the use of governmental resources, the well-developed network of local councillors, and through important financial

resources use, which stimulated participation. The main phenomenon, alongside with popularity decline and presidential bondage maintenance, is the qualitative transformation of the popular base support. PD-L becomes a party of the past, party of a fading-away electorate, while PSD, slowly but sensibly, becomes a party of the future. But, for Romania, the future is still insecure and its agents are relatively few.

#### **d) PSD – the reduction and shift in electoral core**

The results of the PSD+PC Alliance in the 7 June 2009 elections can be analyzed from several perspectives. Compared with the 25 November 2007 elections, social democrats have accumulated 320,000 votes in addition and an additional mandate. But, compared with 30 November 2008 elections, taking into consideration the decrease of turnout, PSD obtained approximately 850,000 votes less on 7 June 2009. Regardless of the calculations based on the relation between turnout and the number of votes, the reduction of PSD electoral core seems to be a certainty:

- Social democrats lose the supremacy in rural areas for the first time after 1990, and the set-back is not counterbalanced by a massive intromission in the big cities areas. The loss of PSD supremacy in rural areas continues a previous trend, announced also during parliamentary elections, when social democrats obtained an additional half millions votes in urban areas then in rural areas.
- PSD could not retrieve voters from northern Moldavia, a region which was a PSD fief until 2004 elections;
- PSD is still maintaining its supremacy in Oltenia and in a part of Muntenia (Brăila, Ialomița), but the distance between PSD and PD-L in those areas is decreasing;
- Romanian left is still maintaining its second position in Transylvania and Banat (west);
- Related with the November 2008 parliamentary elections, a series of organizations obtained results with at least 5% weaker on 7 June (see Appendix 1: Bacău, Brăila, București, Buzău, Constanța, Dolj, Gorj, Ilfov, Maramureș, Prahova), while others improved their performances with at least 5% (Călărași, Dâmbovița, Giurgiu, Sibiu, Teleorman).

Interregional differences between PSD results can be explained by some weaknesses in the organizations' management, and also by the specific political situation in each county.

The fact that approximately 850,000 PSD voters from the parliamentary elections didn't participate also in the European elections can't be seen only as an effect of the European elections' unattractiveness, but they seem to be representing a direct consequence of the disappointment caused by the participation in the grand coalition government, ruled *de facto* by Traian Băsescu. The fact that the main party which initiated Traian Basescu's impeachment, bringing as argument the danger he represents for democracy, made an alliance with him and accepted him to rule the government, generated a deep feeling of disappointment for some of the left-wing militants.

The fragile relation between PSD and its electoral core is a warning signal for social democrats regarding their political identity, as it is perceived by some of the old supporters from rural areas. Being in power as a secondary actor in a grand coalition government and the taking-over of some left-wing themes by Traian Basescu can explain

the situation in which some of traditional voters preferred to stay home, or even voted for the presidential party.

In the PSD results dynamics, as in the comparison between PSD and PD-L mobilization, an essential explanation lies in the decision's decentralization process which characterizes the first party. If PD-L ceased to be a party with opinions and become a party machinery in the hands of the president, PSD is a party in which power is dispersed. The reinforcement of local power makes, on one hand, unity of fundamental leaders for a national campaign with a national list to be damaged, and on the other hand, the European elections to be treated through the impact of European politics on local agendas. But, because of the national level that exists between the local level and the European level, for many local organizations the interposed relation with Europe makes the European elections less relevant. So we don't have to talk only about the popular perception regarding EU, but also about the immediate interests of local political leaders.

Independent of all these, we can say that *the essential phenomenon related to PSD is about the change of its electoral core quality. On the one hand, it gains modern and dynamic electorate who can't recognize itself in PNL's stiff neo-liberalism and can't be seduced by PD-L's authoritarian-populism. On the other hand, PSD loses traditional electorate from the poorest strata, electorate who is scared by tomorrow's threats and insufficiently informed to understand his today's needs, and takes refuge in the safe egoism of the extreme-right – when he doesn't "lock himself" in the house. In this electorate are included those who are better off but who prefer the sustainability of a mediocre change with uncertain perspectives. The crisis' threat doesn't generate solidarity but only crisis experience, and this isn't a dramatic reality for Romania. The modern social democratic electoral ground of European type is constantly and slowly growing, while PSD's post-communist traditional electorate is rapidly and massively decreasing. Now, for PSD it is important to maintain, and, if it can to accelerate this tendency. This happens despite of a context which isn't very favourable, but in which PSD still obtained an important victory (even if narrow).*

#### **e) PNL – a party adrift?**

Liberals have entered these elections with a double change in the party position on the political scene: from a governmental party they became an opposition party and the team that ruled PNL for four years was changed. Such important changes didn't remain without effects upon party performances. The new driving team had to prepare the elections in a short period of time, without the support of the organizations which remained faithful to the team who lost PNL congress, and without the experience of managing electoral competitions on national level. Switching to opposition meant losing the access to the public administrative mechanisms, which were always important for Romanian elections.

Crin Antonescu's strategy, as the main political vector in PNL, was to boost the electoral PNL score through raising the participation rate, using a political discourse of delimitation from the government coalition and even from some past actions of the party. But this strategy wasn't so effective because: a) it had to beat the scepticism of a big part of the electorate in front of the whole political class; b) for such a declamation to have results, it has to be strongly supported by the media, and this never happened, so the audience was limited; c) PNL's credibility, as an alternative to the ruling party was

doubtful, because Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu government is blamed for some of the difficulties with which Romania is confronting right now. So, for the majority of electors, the tinting of Crin Antonescu' declamation regarding PNL controversial government performances either wasn't credible or wasn't so relevant.

Electoral geography points out that PNL did not gain first place in any county, being on third place, after the PSD/PD-L couple or even on fourth place, after UDMR, in the counties with important Hungarians communities, or even after PRM in some areas.

Another factor which can explain the result beneath the PNL leader's expectations can be found in the structure of party voters. The fact that, after the election day, there was a public holiday, affected the potential voters of PNL (located especially in big cities, with above average revenues, being around 45 years old) who preferred to go on holiday.

The fact that PNL denied the results of the vote by incriminating massive frauds, has to be taken into account, but neither liberals, nor anybody else could produce (yet) credible arguments to prove a massive electoral fraud. Until the production of some actual evidence regarding the level of fraud, the result on the 7 June elections has to be explained by PNL's bad management at the local or central level, and by the ideological phase shift of the party. Without the attractiveness which governmental power exercises upon a conservative electorate such as the Romanian one, and without the modernization of the politico-ideological message, PNL risks to be transformed from the only historical party still active, in another party of history.

#### **f) UDMR – the success of minority discipline**

The only incertitude for UDMR regarding the European elections was if the party can obtain two or three mandates, according to electoral turnout. A high turnout at national level could have reduced UDMR's chances to gain three mandates. But the previsions indicated a low turnout, so UDMR leaders used all the resources they have for their voters' mobilization. Equally, catholic and protestant Hungarian priests advised people to go to vote. The media in Hungarian language told Hungarian ethnics to participate to the vote. UDMR mayors and councillors also participated in activating a relatively disciplined electorate. In the end, the result was the expected one, so the three mandates obtained on the 7 June elections brought a supra-representation for Hungarians. If we take into account that on the first and third place of the UDMR's list are the proponents of a non-European message and agenda, who are expressing the vision of a minority of the Hungarian minority, the conclusion is that, because of the apathy and the indiscipline of Romanian citizens' majority, the euro-negative minority will be represented in the EP over its corresponding share in the Romanian society. It is a confirmation of the rule that, when the representatives of majority don't vote, the radical minority wins. But, in this case, the Hungarian community itself is losing. So, the main ideological parties have to be more careful to the needs of those communities and offer them representation guarantees.

#### **g) PRM – resurrection of the ghosts**

The subsequent failures of George Becali's and CV Tudor's personal parties to enter in the European Parliament on 25 November 2007, and in the national parliament in 2008, seemed to consecrate the definitive demise of the official representatives of Romanian nationalism.

The Greater Romania Party's entrance in the EP is not a surprise because on PRM lists there were two party presidents (next to CV Tudor run in George Becali, the New Generation Party – PNG leader), and the votes of the two parties put together make approximately 9%. Strictly mathematical we cannot talk about a resurrection of the national-populism in Romania, but about a great set-up of its representative parties. Psychologically, the score obtained by PRM represents the barometer for the electorate's deep frustrations' reactivation in time of economical crisis.

PRM's success represents the symbiosis between two electorates: the past related nationalism, represented by CV Tudor, and the exotic nationalism, incarnated by George Becali. In this (temporary) marriage, CV Tudor brought voters over 60 years old, especially from rural areas and small towns, and the owner of Steaua Bucharest football club mobilized the youth from urban areas, with average and lower education. The analysis of the electoral exit-polls indicates that the electoral core of PRM (+PNG) is in Muntenia (including București-Ilfov area), Dobrogea, Maramureș and west Oltenia.

### **h) Elena Băsescu – the triumph of hypocrisy**

The fact that the younger daughter of President Traian Basescu has won a seat in the European Parliament is not a surprise because, at the moment when she announced her candidature, it was obvious that the presidential party has the mission to support the presidential progeny. The wide support of PD-L for Elena Basescu was revealed by the public declarations of two ministers from Emil Boc Government (Elena Udrea and Monica Iacob-Ridzi), in which they promoted the young daughter of the president.

More than the result of a sincere and disinterested public popularity, the score obtained by Elena Basescu is the expression of PD-L political-administrative mechanism, through which in every constituency ten votes had to be assigned by default for her, as media revealed. On a simple counter, it results that, if the PD-L decision had been strictly respected in all 18,128 constituencies, Elena Basescu would have gained 181,280 votes. But the 204,280 votes weren't obtained evenly in all constituencies, fact that can be explained by PD-L's organizational weaknesses: the presidential party didn't have representation in all constituencies. To compensate these weaknesses, the branch offices ruled by eager activists mobilized to offer important percentages for the President's daughter. This was the case of Hunedoara County, Suceava County, Prahova County, where Elena Basescu obtained over 7% of the votes. **Guiding some electors to vote a certain person represents an illegal operation of orienting the vote, which is forbidden by law as an infringement upon the free choice principle.** Because somebody couldn't give "the directive of the ten votes" without naming the persons who had to do that (otherwise the risk could have appeared that all the PD-L core electorate to vote for EBA) and without taking all necessary measures for implementing that "directive" (otherwise the presidential progeny could have lost the mandate), we can conclude that vote manipulation presumed an intrusion in the act of voting which effectively and illegally limited its freedom. So EBA's European mandate is, anyhow, whatever the PD-L's intrusion dimension was, the consequence of a fraud. In the same context, it is necessary to make a measurement of the real electoral expenses of EBA's electoral campaign – evidently huge – and to find out their source. In this case, it is possible that electoral fraud is combined with a serious act of corruption. So, the National Anticorruption Direction has to take measures in EBA's case. Probably it won't,

nourishing EU suspicions regarding the lack of progress in the battle against corruption in Romania.

The votes obtained by Elena Basescu don't have to be explained only with a simple bureaucratic mechanism of the presidential party, with a transaction from the top of PD-L, but through the sympathy of some faithful partisans of President Basescu, mainly from the electorate around 30 years old (who wouldn't vote for PD-L). Of course there were some specific cases in which electors voted for Elena Basescu because of reasons of opposition to society, or even originality. But, it is hard to explain the votes obtained by Elena Basescu abroad. Why would voters from Italy, persecuted by the discriminatory and xenophobic legislation of Berlusconi Government (political family relative of Traian Basescu) vote for EBA, about whom they did know much!? Maybe the insurrection of some frustrated people, the adoration of some erratic persons for her father, or the fraudulent discipline of some public servants in mission? The uniformity of the phenomenon indicates, again, the possibility of fraud.

We have to establish if, in the case of the Romanian President's daughter we have witnessed a fraud in the precise meaning. In the Romanian dictionary, fraud is *the accomplishment with dishonesty of acts limiting the rights of the other in order to get benefits for one's self*. Or, a candidate who declares himself independent (according to the Romanian dictionary, *independent is a person who relies on her/his own forces*) and uses a party's apparatus, does not fit to the typology described by the electoral law. Furthermore, such a candidate had limited the access into the European Parliament, "had affected the rights" of the 11<sup>th</sup> place PD-L candidate, whose votes were oriented, in some percentage, to the so called "independent candidate". The organization, the application and the assertion of some votes is against all the laws and regulations in a democratic country! We have to notice the lack of morality, doubled by an obvious manipulation of public opinion. „Independent" EBA declared, at the beginning of the electoral campaign, that she will come back to PD-L whatever the result would be! And she did that without waiting, only for decency, the certification of the elections and the validation of her mandate.

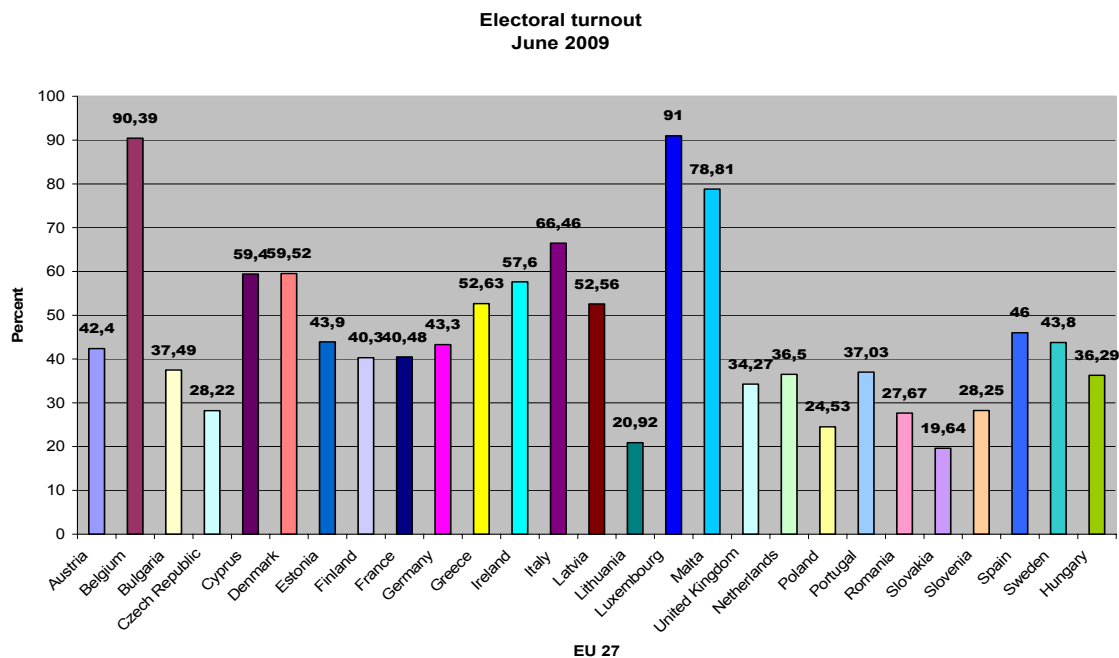
Maybe in the future, civil society together with political factors will better monitor the cases of so-called "independent candidates" (EBA is not the only case in the recent history of European elections, also Laszlo Tokes used the Hungarian Civic Union's gear to enter the European Parliament in 2007) and will find the necessary regulations and sanctions for stopping such violations of the spirit and the rule of law in an electoral system wanting to become democratic, as the Romanian system is.

## IV. Romanian results in the European context

The analysis of Romanian elections results in the European context is an imperative undertaking because, even if the ballot took place in a national constituency and was organized by Romanian authorities, as MEPs represent all European citizens. An essential reason for the analysis of Romanian elections in a European context is given by the very finality of the vote: MEPs do not activate in groups made up according to ethnic or national criteria, but according to the political criterion. Each national party participates in the establishment of political groups, which are organized on a trans-national basis, and those which do not already have an affiliation try to get into an existing group or even to form a new one. MEPs which are elected as independents can affiliate to a political family or, at least, they can try to do this.

The first important aspect in the comparative dimension is the voters' turnout. The June 2009 elections were characterized by the lowest turnout in the three decades history of direct elections for the European Parliament. If, in 1999, the EU15 turnout was 49.51%, after enlargement with 10 more countries on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2005, thus in the EU25, turnout decreased to 45.47%; in June 2009 (EU27) it represented only 43.24%. Among the 27 EU Member States there are huge differences concerning electoral turnout: 91% in Luxembourg and 90.39% in Belgium (in the context of compulsory voting), and only 19.64% in Slovakia, 20.92% in Lithuania, 24.53% in Poland (see Figure 3). Romania ranks fourth (with 27.67%) in the hierarchy of countries with the weakest turnout. In fact, Romania can be circumscribed, from the point of view of electoral behaviour, to the group of new Member States from Central and Eastern Europe, which share almost five decades of totalitarian regime, followed by two decades of transition during which confidence in the utility of politics continuously decreased.

Figure 3: Electoral turnout within EU 27 for the EP elections of June 2009



The decrease of the European average electoral turnout for the June 2009 elections compared to the preceding ones is the result of the combination between the increasing voters' turnout in some countries (for example, Denmark, Estonia, Sweden, Bulgaria a. o.) and the diminishing turnout in others (France, Italy, Cyprus, Malta a. o.). Another factor that could explain a higher turnout in some countries is the fact that, in nine cases, European elections were combined with local or regional elections, or even with a referendum (Denmark).

As a general tendency, we can notice that the EU founding Member States and those from Western Europe had a higher turnout, while in the former communist countries the participation rate was lower. The situation can be explained not only through the differences concerning path dependency – communist past in the east and liberal democracy in the west – but also by the different types of political culture. Countries having longer democratic tradition, which are richer, have a more pronounced participative culture, while countries in regions which are more vulnerable to populism and authoritarianism have a political culture of submission, passivity towards the actions of political actors.

The second important aspect of our comparative analysis is made up of the concrete results of the EU27 ballots. The general observation is that the far right groups consolidated (less the classic ones and more the extremist ones) and that there was an overall failure of the left, with exception of the European Greens. Romania does not follow this European trend because social democrats won the elections (they are the 5<sup>th</sup> national delegation within the PSE group, considering the number of seats) and the popular group (PD-L, even together with UDMR) have witnessed a setback compared to the 2007 EP elections. One must also mention the fact that, like in most new Member States, in Romania the Greens are not a current having significant popular support. Also, they do not have a specific ideology, but only a pseudo-ideology which, however, it is true that they constantly affirm.

In the following lines we are presenting the results and tendencies within the main European political currents (see Figure 4):

#### **a. European People's Party – European Democrats**

In the case of the popular group, we can acknowledge a marginal lack of success, as the number of seats did not vary substantially compared with the 2004 elections. Thus, the percentage of the popular group in the European Parliament decreased compared to 2004, from 36.7% to 35.9%. The immediate explanation consists in the fact that a significant part of the former EPP-ED group, made up of British and Czech conservatives, decided to establish a separate group, having a euro-sceptic and, more precisely, sovereignists and anti-federalist vision. This action has, though, the merit of partially clarifying the heterogeneous options of the popular group, strengthening the German style Christian democratic component, which is integrationist and even federalist. This bizarre combination expressed the EPP-ED group tradition to extend its political influence by increasing the number of members simultaneously with a loss in the unity of thought and action. (Until now, however, the main strike to the EPP-ED ideological constancy was dealt by the British conservatives, as the Blairism of the third

way undermined the identitar clarity of the socialist left, thus emphasizing the structural conflict between the British and the European continental political cultures.)

The split of conservatives, as any other separation, will have as an immediate effect some resentment within the EPP-ED group. They seem to already determine the group, which does not have an absolute majority in the EP, to look for alliances rather to its centre and left than to its right (conservative and beyond). Such an orientation will diminish the effects of the much drastic defeat of the democratic left. (Which also consolidated in terms of numbers by welcoming the MEPs of the Italian Democratic Party, resulting from the fusion between the Democratic Party of the Left, party of reformed communists, with Margherita, having a social-liberal orientation.)

The relative success of the EPP-EP can be explained by the fact that national governments led by the leaders of component parties have better adapted to the requirements of the economic crisis, adopting, as in the cases of France and Germany, public policies that were usually employed by the left, such as measures of social protection and a more pronounced state intervention in the economy. In spite of the fact that this has created a certain ideological confusion, the spectre of the crisis was sufficient in the eyes of voters which participated in the elections and chose the right, especially in Member States of the Union's western part. In Member States from Central and Eastern Europe, success of the right was mainly due to the persistence of the "right's better economic efficiency" (anticommunist) myth, which was perpetuated, in the context of the region's emerging crisis (especially in Poland and Lithuania), but also to the attempt to sanction the left's national governments (Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary).

The abovementioned reasons also constituted the main feature of European elections, meaning the prevalence of national topics over the European ones. From this point of view, the message of the Popular group was the best adapted to the citizens' requests, citizens who continue to consider that national governments are the most coherent institutions in the fight against crisis. Also, it had become obvious that, although the governments of some new Eastern European Member States support more European integration, their population does not perceive its own identity as European but rather as national. Such a perception does not necessarily correspond to the reality (both in the west and the east of the continent) but it cannot be surprising as long as national governments and parties have the quasi-monopoly of communication and use to take all credits for the success achieved with EU support, transferring to the EU responsibility for all national failures.

The relative victory of the right or at least the avoidance of a massive defeat gives the expression of Europe's re-nationalization danger, of abandoning or limiting European solidarity (whose champion is the European) in favour of a comeback to national egoism and nationalist protectionism. The crisis, which has not yet reached its peak (moderated especially due to European solidarity by means of the Euro currency, by coordinating anti-crisis policies and solidarity funds), has played in favour of the egoistic Europe and not of solidarity-based Europe. Having a much simpler and comfortable message for the feeling of symbolic security, the right won where, by inconstancy, hypocrisy and arrogance has not left votes to the far right. It is, though, obvious that the extreme right has taken especially traditional votes of the left.

## **b. Party of European Socialists**

In the case of the PSE group, the abovementioned factors contributed to a significantly more reduced score (21.9% compared to 27.6%, in 2004).

a. The attempt of European socialists to have a unified campaign at European level, touching upon purely European issues and based on a Manifesto of European Socialists, did not have the expected effects. First of all, from a simple, clear and mobilizing document, as it was initially conceived, the Manifesto became an extended, complicated and ambiguous text as a result of its negotiation with member parties and the complex compromises agreed with them. During the negotiation process several faults became visible: between governing parties (opportunistic) and opposition ones (intransigent), between Nordic parties (dogmatic) and southern ones (sophisticated), between central, eastern and southern (federalist) and the western and Nordic ones (sovereignist). In what concerns the vision over the European construction a significant clash took place between the positions of British Labour and of the Spanish Socialists. Regarding social projects, the maximal approach of French socialists and Nordic social democrats was hard to accommodate with the prudent pragmatism of German, Austrian and Italian social democrats. By trying to reconcile these opposites, the PES message has lost its impact force and power to convince. Additionally, the effort to adapt the PES Manifesto to the national specific and to complete it with national themes, differentiating and circumstantial elements, have overwhelmed the common idea reservoir. For example, the Slovakian Socialist Party declared that it did not take into account the PES Manifesto at all.

b. In such conditions not only that the political campaign message of the European left was different from country to country and it was even contradictory. (Thus, while eastern parties promised opening of EU labour market, the western ones promised protectionist measures for the national labour force.) Moreover, in some cases attacks were formulated (directly or indirectly, implicitly or explicitly) between PES members (see the proposals to sanction Romania for the lack of progress in the fight against big corruption) or the PES campaign initiatives themselves (see the repudiation of the PES list by some socialist leaders for some “unfortunate candidatures”).

If within the EPP-ED such attacks did not take place (on the contrary, EPP leaders from one country quickly reacted by adopting public positions in favour of their colleagues from another country, when circumstances imposed it), the national orientation of the member parties’ electoral message was not a surprise or a disillusion, as this was their standard position. Giving up internationalism, a fundamental value of the democratic left, made it lose its credibility among its supporters and its attractiveness for the undecided.

c. In the same context one can place the incapacity of the European socialist left to promote trans-national image leaders that would have inspired and coagulated the electorate. Contrary to the EPP-ED, which had in Jose Durrao Barroso an official candidate supported by everybody (actually contested within the group but without publicizing this) for the EC Presidency, PES could not agree on its own candidate. Moreover, even before elections, the Portuguese socialist prime minister (out of national pride), the Spanish socialist prime minister (out of Iberian solidarity) and the British labour minister (out of national egoism) expressed their support for the EPP candidate. Other socialist and social democratic leaders have outlined the same position and the

same support during the campaign; in some cases, in the hope they will thus be able to get in exchange convenient commissioner offices. Without European leaders, without political solidarity and coordination between socialist national leaders and without a single candidate for the leadership of the European executive, PES could have hardly won the battle against the EPP.

d. On the other hand, the strategy for exiting the crisis elaborated by European socialist and social democratic parties was not perceived as credible. Explanations in this case are also complex. One should start from the event that, especially in the context of the global economic and financial crisis, the ideas of the left were taken over by right-wing parties, which gave up on their former neo-liberal programmes, thesis and discourse. This fact leads us to a fundamental question: if the ideas of the left are winning, why do the parties of the left lose?

- The resemblance between the political discourses of the right and the left created confusion and reduced the capacity of the left to outline its competitive advantage compared to the right, to distinguish them more clearly. This does not explain, however, why the confusion affected more the “original” than the “copy”, the “imitated” more than the “imitator”. Looking at the figures, one can say that, by taking over the ideas of the left, the EPP rather kept its own electorate than “stole” the PES electorate. The latter migrated rather towards the extremes (generally the far right, but in the case of Germany also towards the far left). The conclusion is that, in order to have kept its electorate and eventually to have attracted another, PES should have proposed more radical solutions, should have explained them more clearly in the public discourse and should have been more constant in their implementation (when and where it was in a situation of matching words with facts). Such a behaviour is difficult to achieve within the European Parliament, where the minority PSE group is in a situation of either accepting isolation and, thus, abandoning all hope of efficiently defending the interests of its electorate, or compromising with the other groups, which would eventually partially satisfy its electorate but would blur its identity and merits.
- The fact that parties of the left have lost, in spite of their winning ideas, can also be explained by the means of communication used to convey these ideas. Communication vectors are institutional and personal. The institutional ones – European institutions and national parties, as well as the civil society, school and media – did not fulfil their duty of completely and objectively communicating the reality of the ideas and policies contest at European level. The personal vectors are the very leaders of European left and their communication can be explicit (discourse) and implicit (behaviour). But it is no doubt that many leaders of the left are not convincing any more, as long as the authenticity of the convictions they declare was lost in the conflict between values supported and their concrete lifestyles. The image of “caviar” left overshadowed in many places the image of the “democratic left”. Even if the message of EPP leaders is less popular in itself, the promoters of this message inspire more credibility, as there is a coincidence between what they say and how they live.

- The communication of left-wing ideas is confronted with difficulties related to the complexity and their high degree of sophistication. For understanding and accepting the programme of the left there is a need for a well-trained and well-informed electorate. But the majority of people to which the message of the left is addressed do not have such features. The traditional electorate of the left searches for simple solutions with an immediate effect. This electorate is dominated by fear rather than by reason. The negative reaction of the left-wing electorate can be explained by the *fear of strangers* (valid especially for the developed west which fear that it will be overwhelmed by the “culture of the poor east”), *fear of change* (everywhere there is sufficient welfare or not so much poverty as to encourage taking a risk of losing the already available right hoping to win a greater one) and by the *fear of the unknown* (especially valid for the undeveloped east, where insecurity prompts for prudence towards projects which are hard to understand).
- The fundamental fact that can explain the setback of the social democratic left is, though, that in times of crisis its progressive message, promoting openness towards minorities, solidarity and inclusive policies, was little accepted by citizens interested by strengthening their personal and their community’s security. This confirms the principle according to which as long as existential needs do not reach a critical level, but remain at a threat level, what prevails is egoism, while during the challenges of a crisis reaching high levels solidarity prevails. For the moment, the crisis has reached levels which make solidarity (reasonable attitude contradicting the egoist reflex) yet unacceptable. The aggravation of the crisis or the acknowledgement of its danger will make the unacceptable unavoidable. The stakes of the European democratic left is to use its persuasive capacity in order to make the unacceptable acceptable before it becomes unavoidable. Synthesising, social democrats proposed more balanced solutions to problems to which the right has offered straight answers (the emigration problem; the intervention of nation states in economic problems, of the protectionist sort a. o.). Social democracy has become too sophisticated for the way in which people react in times of crisis while the European right has managed to better capitalize the “fear” factor to its own benefit than the left.

e. The left has also won or lost according to concrete national conditions. Thus, it has won where it was for many electoral cycles in opposition to governments which are facing strong contestation (Greece) or where it has a strong tradition (Denmark). Where the programme of the left has approached to the centre and third way model, it was accused by the right as being inauthentic (“plagiarist of the right”) and by the far left for being inconsistent (“traitor of the left”). The same happened where the left took over a part of the environmentalist message: the copy was not preferred to the original. In the United Kingdom what mattered was that the Labour was in power since 1997 and that the Gordon Brown government was shaken by scandals concerning immoral reimbursements of some of its members. In France, after losing the presidential competition, socialists re-entered into the logic of internal fighting, which distanced potential voters from a party considered to be unstable.

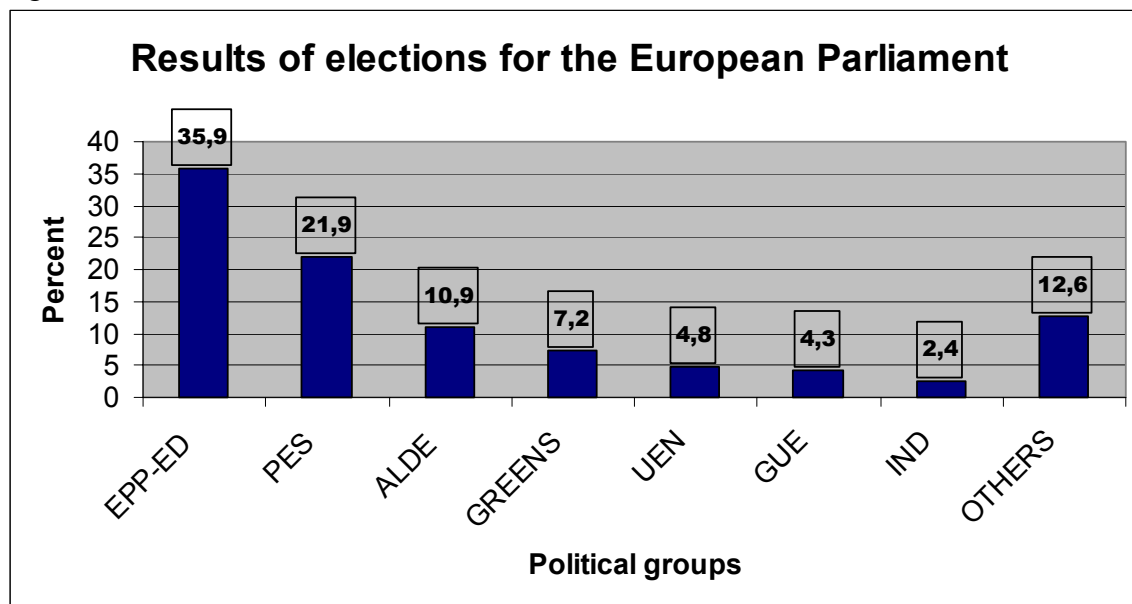
vi. Finally, the main problem for European socialists at the level of national action was that they did not manage to convince their own electorate to vote and to support the proposed topics. This is the consequence of a lacking European public space at national level, where both national and European already established actors could express themselves as well as developing trans-national ones. The lack of this space affects for the moment less the EPP, which is more attached to confederalism than to European federalism. It is necessary, therefore, apart from a rethinking of future strategies and a reformulation of a clearer and more unitary ideological option at European level, to Europeanize political and social actors, as well as to create a national European public space. It is obvious that the European democracy cannot exist without a European demos and this demos must be politically constructed. The EU must find an inspiration in the Romanian philosophy and experience aiming at causing the form to create substance.

### c. The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

In what concerns then group of liberals and democrats, it has also witnessed a significant decrease after elections (from 12.7%, in 2004, to 10.9% at present). The main cause was the economic crisis, which affected the credibility of the neo-liberal discourse practiced by ALDE in the past. Also, European liberal parties were not perceived as having real solutions for the crisis exit.

European liberals had better results wherever they adopted a centrist social discourse (Estonia, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands). In the UK, their left-wing discourse brought them very close to the Labour, which, in the context of a turnout above European average, reflects a take-over of a significant part of the Labour electorate. Similarly, in the Netherlands, centrist liberals of the Democrats '66 have had an unexpectedly good result, while the Dutch Labour had a bad result. On the whole, though, European liberals lost to a considerable extent at European level.

Figure 4: Distribution of EP seats after the 4-7 June 2009 elections in EU 27



#### **d. The Greens**

One of the winners of the European polls from this year was the group of European Greens. The victory is not surprising, in the context in which environmental topics are beginning to have an ever increasing share in the present society. However, some clarifications are necessary concerning the good result of the Greens (7.2% compared to only 5.5% in 2004). It was primarily based on the results from the Union's western Member States (especially in France and Germany). In the EU eastern Member States, the Greens are still an insignificant political force.

The good results of European Greens were based on the radical left-wing message, which was better perceived by the competent left-wing electorate from the west of the continent. Thus, in France the ecologists reached parity with the socialists, taking over a large part of the traditional left-wing and far left French electorate. In Germany, the result of the Greens was favoured by the existence of the Grand Coalition between Christian democrats and social democrats, the opposition vote being won mainly by the Greens. In fact, the European Greens were the only party which had an authentically trans-national campaign.

One must also mention that, in reality, the technocratic ideology of the right is a pseudo-ideology and that is why the option for the Greens is another side of the crisis of democracy. The quest for technocrats or managers instead of leaders and ideologies reflects either satisfaction for the present status, which thus doesn't need change anymore, or fear of change. Hence, voting for the Greens (whose preoccupation for the environment was thus internalized and ideologically elaborated by the European left) is just a soft alternative (more acceptable) of turning away the electorate from the quasi-ideology of the extreme, especially from the far right.

#### **e. The United Left**

The European (radical) left was one of the groups which decreased its already diminished share in the European Parliament (from 5.2% in 2004, to 4.3%). The European (radical) left, regrouping the former communist parties from the Member States, thus continues its downward trend witnessed after the fall of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, which became a chronic trend after the accession of the states in this region to the EU. As a matter of fact, better results were registered in the western Member States (Germany, Portugal, France) and less in the new Member States – with the exception of the Czech Republic, where the percentage of nostalgic people was significant and where communists have a more moderate action tradition, and in Cyprus, where they're in government in the Greek area.

The message of the left did not have the expected result, although it was a radical one, proposing alternative solutions for the crisis exit. However, their marginal character within the political spectrum and the repetition of themes becoming obsolete, of traditional communism, has led to a reduced appetite of European citizens for their message.

#### **f. Euro-sceptics and extremists**

One of the declared winners of the European polls of this year was the group of euro-sceptics and extremists. However, apart from increasing their general share (from 12% in 2004 to 19.8% at present), a series of clarifications must be made concerning its

pretty heterogeneous composition. First of all, the already existing Union for Europe of Nations (UEN) and the Independence and Democracy group (ID) had no significant increase. The increase could be witnessed in the case of non-affiliated MEPs. In this case, a large share was represented by the British and Czech conservatives groups, which, although eurosceptic, have more moderate positions concerning other European issues than the institutional construction. Also, initially, the Democratic Party from Italy was included within the non-affiliated group, although it had not decided its precise doctrinal identity, situated anyway between liberalism and social democracy; eventually it was affiliated to the PSE group.

Nevertheless, the most worrisome phenomenon of these elections is the upswing of extremist right wing parties, with a radical, anti-immigration or even anti-European message (as was the case of the UK Independence Party, which supports the very split of the UK from the EU – it got no less than 17% of the votes!). Extremism is doubled by xenophobia towards some ethnic and religious groups (the cases of ATAKA coalition in Bulgaria with 12%, JOBBIK party in Hungary with 15% of the votes, Freedom Party from Holland with 17% of the votes) or by emphasising a single issue (Pirate Party of Sweden), ignoring all other problem. Other parties consolidated their traditional contestation position towards the existing European system (National Front of France, Freedom Party of Austria).

In the general framework of European extremists, the Greater Romania Party (PRM) has a special position, since it had constantly adopted a pro-European stance in what concerns the future of Europe, synchronized with the option of most Romanian citizens. (This is another reason for saying that seats of the PRM were practically wasted, its MEPs being unable to find their place in the mainstream groups or in the eurosceptic minority groups.)

As we can see, there is a broad spectrum of right wing extremists which got into the European Parliament. However, it is hard to believe that they will be able to make up a consistent group and that they will be able to have a serious impact over the activity of the European legislative. Thus, it can be said that votes for these parties were wasted by the electorate. Nonetheless, the message towards the European political spectrum was pretty clear, even in the context of the low voting turnout: the lack of coherence and concrete results within the European process can fill in the ranks of those unhappy with the activity of European institutions. For the moment the political exponents of this current are relatively few but very active. It is not their number, however, that must be worrisome but the tendency fuelling them. It reminds of similar evolutions from the interwar period.

The excessive bureaucratization of the European political process, the perception that the “games” are done “behind close doors” are strong motivations for certain categories of voters to cast their ballots in favour of euro-sceptic groups.

However, a close analysis of the results of the last European elections indicate the fact that right wing parties did not have an even upsurge all over Europe, the phenomenon being a rather national one with European significance and implications. In general, the rise of the right wing took place in those countries where social democratic parties suffered heavy losses (United Kingdom, Netherlands, Hungary or even Austria). In fact, the lack of attractiveness of social democracy and its failure to integrate socially marginalized people or those frustrated with their social and political status has

revitalized the option for extremist movements. This does not necessarily mean that social democratic voters have turned into voters of the far right parties, but the failure to promote the welfare state has determined the passivity of the left-wing voters and the activation of anti-system movements. As a general trend we can mention the fact that the far right takes its support from the middle classes, which is greatly affected at a psychological level, by the economic crisis, as it was used to high living standards and now it is forced to restrain its expenses in order to be able to face the new challenges.

## Conclusions

1. **The main significance of European elections in Romania is the crisis of legitimacy of the politicians in front of the citizens.** The fact that the citizens' mistrust in political parties and the fundamental institution of democracy (the Parliament) becomes chronic should represent a powerful warning signal for the whole Romanian society. The constant shrinking in the electoral turnout creates the premises of over-representation of some minority currents in the Romanian society, often of a national-populist orientation.

2. Two decades after the fall of communism, **the enthusiasm generated by the democratic project of the Revolution has exhausted, and citizens do not find the necessary motivation for participating to the political life but by inertia.** The Romanian society became ever more fragmented and egoism seems to be the main factor articulating the dynamics of individuals, groups and communities. The general elections in 2008, together with the European elections of 7 June 2009, constitute the most powerful signals for the failure of building an authentic democratic society, Romania being, in fact, dominated by a trans-partisan oligarchy, in which the citizen seems to be important only as an instrument for legitimizing access to control and consumption of public resources.

3. **The EP ballot indicated the fact that the PSD and the PD-L are almost at the same level of mobilization concerning their electoral cores, but the tendency indicated by the last elections is a quantitative reduction of them.** The main sanction that a part of the PSD and PD-L sympathizers conveyed to the present ruling parties for the formation of the grand coalition cabinet did not consist of abandoning their values but of absenteeism. If the confronting situation between PD-L and PSD had the advantage of maintaining within the Romanian society the hope in the existence of alternatives, the grand coalition government led many citizens to consider that there are no important differences among parties, irrespective of their names. Such a psychological situation determines many citizens to consider that political parties are useless and voting is a waste of time.

It is true, however that the diminishing of citizens' trust in politics is a **widespread phenomenon across Europe**, but in post-communist countries its scale is much broader, if we look at the electoral turnouts.

4. **The European rise of the right**, and especially of nationalist and euro-sceptic currents, represents a warning signal for the direction towards which the European Union

could regress. Blocking a deepening of integration, and also of the Union's enlargement, could represent the long term consequences of the 4-7 June 2009 vote, although almost 80% of EP seats are occupied by members of pro-European parties.

**5. Romania, as a new EU Member States, is disadvantaged by the increase in the rows of euro-sceptic MEPs, as they will develop a ore aggressive rhetoric against countries entering the Union between 2004 and 2007, they will try to block future enlargements and their rhetoric will also put pressure on the next European Commission.** In fact, the European popular group, if we think about parties such as the "People of Freedom" of Silvio Berlusconi, the Union for a Popular Movement of Nicolas Sarkozy and the Christian Democratic Union of Angela Merkel, maintain an ambiguous attitude towards the future of the European Union.

**6. PRM's access to the EP should not constitute in itself a strong reason for concern** as the number of nationalist voters in Romania did not increase (420,000 on 7 June 2009), but in fact decreased (for example PRM and PNG cumulated during the parliamentary elections of 2004 over 1.5 million votes). PRM's rise could though be fostered by: a) the rise of nationalist and euro-sceptic currents all over the European Union; b) the existence of a grand coalition government which makes the discontent be channelled towards anti-system formations, as long as PNL does not coalesce the electorate's discontent; c) underground schemes having as a purpose propelling CV Tudor towards the presidential function, so that he would enter the second round and the election of the current president to become a certitude.

**7. Romanian MEPs are entering a more numerically fragmented and ideologically heterogeneous European Parliament than in the past, in which forming new coalitions would prove even more difficult.** In such a situation, flexibility and negotiation capacity will prove to be essential qualities which MEPs will have to display for achieving the goals they set.

**8. Left-wing parties (mainly social democratic) are facing major political and ideological challenges,** as they will have to act in an environment in which right-wing parties practise pragmatism to the extreme, towards losing any doctrinal consistency, thus getting votes, and some left-wing politicians could be tempted to follow the populist right's example, in order to get electoral support. The competition between the European right and left, with populist instruments, could have as an effect paralysing the communitarian institutional complex.

**9. Romanian MEPs which are members of the European People's Party Group (Christian democratic) will be also in a conflicting situation within the group they belong to,** as according to what we emphasized earlier, the European right is the promoter of policies which are unfavourable to new EU Member States. It remains to be seen if the Romanian popular group will become a dissident within the EPP group, they will comply to its tendencies or, in the happiest alternative, they will manage to modify from within the position of the European right.

**10. The comparison between the discourse of Romanian political parties during the European elections and the general discourse of the European political families, which they belong to, and in / through whose structures they will act within the EP** shows that: a. to the extent to which European themes have been approached or Romania's European interest was defined, the position of Romanian parties was similar up to identification; b. PSD's discourse is identical or at least convergent with the PES

discourse; c. PD-L's discourse is clearly positioned at the left of the EPP discourse; d. PNL's discourse is clearly positioned at the right of the ALDE discourse. It results that the Romanian right is ideologically uncoupled with the European right, while the Romanian left is ideologically synchronized with the European left (even if left-wing Romanians are closer to the right of the left – that is why they consider themselves social democrats). This situation will create integration and efficiency problems to the Romanian right within the EP. *In the future, for orienting Romanian electorate, it will be essential that the press and the civil society follow and makes public in Romania the main discourse of European political families, too (especially in campaign periods) in order to allow Romanian citizens to establish their options also according to the coincidence or compatibility between the message of the preferred Romanian parties and the message of corresponding European parties.*

**11. Most Romanian political parties used European elections in order to position themselves favourably before the beginning of presidential elections.** Although the **hyper-presidentialisation of European elections is unfortunate in principle**, as it had reduced the chance for pedagogical debate, so necessary in Romania, concerning the purpose and nature of the European project (it was only sporadically discussed on the topic of the relation between Romanian and the United States of Europe), **the simple comparison of electoral lists shows a great difference between priorities and strategies.** Thus: a. the PSD list was based on a massive group of current MEPs with European experience and competence, as well as with a positive public image (none of them could be accused of corruption, an attacking theme favoured in Romanian politics), which indicated the belief of social democrats that the presidency imposes a / and is won by its solid foundation upon the united Europe; b. the PD-L list was based on a hard core of people in the entourage of President Băsescu, accompanied by some anonymous people rewarded by him (with the exception of the fifth place), which shows the intention of finally closing up with the inheritance of the Democratic Party and the liberal political transplant, for the purpose of getting a brainless electoral machine ever ready to answer the presidential calling (European elections were just another step towards PD-L's dissolution as a real political operator, as a democratic type of actor); c. the PNL list excluded technocrats (even those with a European reputation) in order to promote people able to fight individually in a total confrontation with ruling parties, which shows that liberals have renounced their European ambitions and aspirations, deciding (in agreement to their traditional domestic orientation which justified adding the word "national" to the otherwise internationalist liberalism) the only thing that matters (especially for a shrinking party) is internal guerrilla; d. the UDMR list, by placing first a radical, unrepresentative for the party and for the majority of its electorate, proved that its strategy aims, before any unitary political project (be it at Romanian or European level), to avoid fragmentation of an ever smaller electorate, not so much due the reduction of the Hungarian origin population, but to the latter's increasing refusal, to the extent to which its cultural rights had been recognized, to remain captive to an ethnic party, lacking an ideological identity ; e. the PRM list, reducing to the (accidental) reunion of forces between two histrionic personalities, otherwise in open enmity, shows the conviction of the protagonists that the radical reparative message cannot have political success without uniting the vanguard and the rear guard which propagate it, but also the project – confirmed in practice – that by joining ranks the far right will have a say, also in the

delicate balance between the main parties participating to the presidential elections or directly upon it.

12. Although the main political actors considered the EP elections as an important test before presidential elections, **the 7 June 2009 scrutiny represents a relevant predictor only as far as the political parties will continue along the same guiding lines**, of deepening the fault between them and the citizens. If the partitocratic type of behaviours will continue or will even grow, then the presidential elections will be a competition between the parties' electoral cores, between their capacity of bringing their people to vote, in the conditions of a wave of absenteeism and disinterest. *If, on the contrary, one or several candidates will succeed in imposing in the public debate the fact that presidential elections represent an opportunity of rewriting the political contract between politicians and citizens, then, in the context of renewed hopes, the electoral turnout could substantially rise and the hopes of Romanians for a better future could receive new arguments and realistic perspectives.*

## Recommendations

The main responsible more the deepening of the crisis of confidence in politicians is Traian Băsescu, through all that he has done after December 2004. If he should win a new mandate, this will deepen even further the cleavage between politicians and citizens.

As Traian Băsescu's campaign strategy aims a renewal of the image of "fighter against the wicked system", using shocking expressions in order to get mass media attention, as well as self-victimization in front of his adversaries' attacks, we recommend the following:

- Media should become much more selective in approaching presidential statements in order to thus avoid entering the strategy logic of Traian Băsescu. If mass media (especially the electronic one) will abandon the attitude to amplify the sensational and exotic statements, concentrating instead on the fundamental issues of Romanian reality and the candidates for the Romanian presidency will focus on important topics, their messages will reach to the citizens;
- Traian Băsescu's competitors should not make the error of positioning their message on exclusive anti- Băsescu rhetoric. Citizens are not interested by a simple removal from office of Traian Băsescu if this does not also mean changes in the reality of Romanian political and economic life. People will participate in a larger number to elections than during the last polls only if they will be convinced that their life could change for the better in the post-Băsescu era. Increasing participation with each percent will move Traian Băsescu away from a new mandate. Therefore, the main theme of the future electoral campaign should be the new social contract between political parties and citizens.

In order to avoid suspicions of fraud during presidential elections, we propose the removal of voting on additional lists and the correlative introduction of the vote through correspondence.

Taking into account the fact that within the new European Parliament the force of the euro-sceptic orientation is much more important than before, that the vision of Europe defined as a mere single economic space is shared by a larger number of MEPs, Romanian MEPs must establish a **trans-partisan political pact**, across ideological cleavages, concerning the broad interest topics at the level of the European Union:

- Strengthening the Union's initiative and reaction capacity by supporting its organisation on explicitly federal grounds;
- Implementing a unitary and coherent policy in the field of energy, including the alternative energy transit routes;
- Convergent action to eliminate all persisting barriers against the free movement of labour force;
- Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy in order for it to take into account the specific of the economies in Central Europe, mainly the fragmented character of property and the predominantly ecologic feature of the agricultural production;
- Setting the base for a common European policy in the demographic field, in order to overcome problems generated by an ageing European population;
- Continuing the stabilization process by integrating the regions in the neighbourhood of the European Union;
- Establishing a set of rules concerning monitoring of financial markets and eliminating fiscal paradises.

We recommend the maximum capitalization of the political and professional potential of all the 33 MEPs that will represent Romanian citizens in the European Parliament, by:

- Covering all 20 specialized committees of the EP and sending MEPs from the main three political families in the most important ones (Regional Development, Agriculture and Rural Development, Transport and Tourism Foreign Affairs);
- Specialization of MEPs, in order to be able to cover the whole problems area of specialized committees;
- Hiring highly qualified personnel within all parliamentary offices, which will be able to offer the necessary expertise for a complex and specialized activity.

It will be also necessary to strengthen the component of direct communication with citizens within each EP political group, so that the interest of the voters towards the communitarian legislative institution rises and its decisions have a broader public support. EP's direct communication must be accompanied by a more efficient communication programme of information and mass education around European themes.

PSD must participate to the process of propelling reflection within European social democracy concerning the latter's identity in the context of the economic crisis.

Also, European social democracy should channel its efforts for organizing a new type of capitalism that will diminish the risks of a new economic crisis occurrence of the type and magnitude of the present one. Special attention must be paid during the following period to measures to be taken at European level for stopping the economic crisis and preparing economic re-launch.

The European left will have to strengthen its level of coordination and solidarity between its action at communitarian level and the one at national level and avoid the trap of adopting nationalist messages at the level of national policies. Only a concerted action of national left-wing parties with the Party of European Socialists can foster a strong competition from the progressive ideas for the right-wing forces. Division of the left means the success of right-wing forces. Subsequently, the rise of the far right in Europe cannot be stopped by a mere rhetoric against extremism, but only by good governance. Good governance means transparent governance. That is why the European left must set as its goal both reducing bureaucracy and making it more efficient.

It is essential to create a European public space at national level, as well as creating trans-national political and social actors that would act and compete within this space. The next European elections must take place explicitly between European political parties (and not between national parties) and eventually in trans-national electoral constituencies. This means not only a high level re-organisation of European parties and of the relations between them and national member parties, but also creating institutionalized structures of European parties in the EU Member States. In what concerns PES, it should establish organizations of national activists that do not belong to member parties and, at the same time, open distinct national representations (even if in close collaboration with national member parties).

## Appendix

### 1. Comparative table between the number of votes obtained by the PSD+PC political alliance in the 2008 national parliamentary elections and in the 2009 European elections

Nr.	Domestic Constituency	Votes in the elections for the Chamber of Deputies 30 November 2008		Votes in the elections for the European Parliament 7 June 2009		Percentage difference
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
	<b>Category:</b>					
1	<b>Alba</b>	25,786	20.00%	20,655	22.36%	+ 2.36%
2	<b>Arad</b>	30,116	21.23%	20,825	21.06%	- 0.17%
3	<b>Argeş</b>	88,558	45.39%	57,845	41.42%	- 3.97%
4	<b>Bacău</b>	82,615	38.00%	43,303	31.88%	- 6.22%
5	<b>Bihor</b>	38,095	18.36%	29,496	18.07%	- 0.29%
6	<b>Bistriţa-Năsăud</b>	32,800	31.97%	28,694	34.86%	+ 2.89%
7	<b>Botoşani</b>	44,733	32.75%	34,868	32.63%	- 0.12%
8	<b>Braşov</b>	41,029	23.01%	27,179	22.61%	- 0.40%
9	<b>Brăila</b>	51,870	47.65%	26,931	40.95%	- 6.70%
10	<b>Buzău</b>	66,845	38.59%	35,550	31.91%	- 6.68%
11	<b>Caraş-Severin</b>	30,481	29.80%	22,739	29.86%	- 0.06%
12	<b>Călăraşi</b>	18,652	21.38%	19,379	27.71%	+ 6.33%
13	<b>Cluj</b>	41,407	19.16%	29,522	19.82%	+ 0.66%
14	<b>Constanţa</b>	126,364	47.80%	44,904	34.64%	- 13.16%
15	<b>Covasna</b>	6,254	10.88%	4,009	6.19%	- 4.69%
16	<b>Dâmboviţa</b>	70,529	35.96%	69,545	43.01%	+ 7.05%
17	<b>Dolj</b>	118,630	47.94%	64,405	39.20%	- 8.74%
18	<b>Galaţi</b>	87,666	46.53%	56,869	42.44%	- 4.09%
19	<b>Giurgiu</b>	17,950	18.92%	25,474	27.29%	+ 8.37%
20	<b>Gorj</b>	53,739	44.42%	31,189	34.26%	- 10.16%
21	<b>Harghita</b>	6,830	6.35%	3,698	3.40%	- 2.95%
22	<b>Hunedoara</b>	54,211	31.32%	29,215	28.56%	- 2.76%
23	<b>Ialomiţa</b>	36,481	42.90%	23,232	44.80%	+ 1.90%
24	<b>Iaşi</b>	80,110	34.37%	53,298	37.63%	+ 3.26%
25	<b>Ilfov</b>	33,250	29.57%	20,496	21.02%	- 8.55%
26	<b>Maramureş</b>	44,268	30.46%	24,475	25.24%	- 5.22%
27	<b>Mehedinţi</b>	36,138	34.41%	32,955	37.03%	+ 2.62%
28	<b>Mureş</b>	34,973	17.63%	23,776	15.73%	- 1.90%
29	<b>Neamţ</b>	67,839	34.63%	43,074	32.01%	- 2.62%
30	<b>Olt</b>	79,129	45.02%	73,612	47.04%	+ 2.02%
31	<b>Prahova</b>	79,737	32.24%	41,032	24.59%	- 7.65%
32	<b>Satu Mare</b>	25,261	22.63%	19,529	20.63%	- 2.00%
33	<b>Sălaj</b>	22,717	25.50%	18,953	25.32%	- 0.18%
34	<b>Sibiu</b>	34,073	25.72%	24,197	32.06%	+ 6.34%
35	<b>Suceava</b>	68,327	30.83%	38,164	28.81%	- 2.02%
36	<b>Teleorman</b>	69,471	40.39%	86,018	51.68%	+11.29%
37	<b>Timiş</b>	50,616	27.41%	35,453	27.00%	- 0.41%
38	<b>Tulcea</b>	19,769	29.04%	13,000	28.75%	- 0.29%

39	<b>Vaslui</b>	55,962	42.67%	41,738	47.55%	- 4.88%
40	<b>Vâlcea</b>	57,801	40.77%	40,814	39.56%	- 1.21%
41	<b>Vrancea</b>	69,374	48.78%	44,489	48.48%	- 0.30%
42	<b>București Municipality</b>	175,418	33.42%	77,561	28.04%	- 5.38%
43	<b>Diaspora</b>	3,575	15.17%	2,048	14.87%	- 0.30%
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>2,279,449</b>	<b>33.09%</b>	<b>1,504,218</b>	<b>31.07%</b>	<b>- 2.02%</b>

## 2. Chronology

**4 May – Sfântu Gheorghe** – UDMR has officially launched its candidates for the European Parliament. The meeting was attended by 3000 people. The UDMR launching was made in the presence of the Union’s president, Marko Bela and of the president of National Council of Hungarians in Transylvania (CNMT), the Reformed bishop Tokes Laszlo. This year, UDMR and CNMT participate to the elections for the European Parliament on a common list, with 43 people. The top spot of the “list of Hungarian solidarity” is occupied by Tokes Laszlo, followed by Winkler Iuliu, Sogor Csaba, Szilagyi Zsolt and Kovacs Peter.

**7 May – House of Parliament** – PNL has launched its list of 33 candidates for the European Parliament. The meeting was attended by 400 party members. The only candidate on an eligible spot, who was present, was Norica Nicolai. Ludovic Orban, Executive President of the party, declared: *This EP electoral campaign represents the start of the presidential campaign for presidential elections, for which PNL has only one solution: Crin Antonescu.* On the PNL list for the EP the following candidates were placed on eligible spots: Norica Nicolai, Adina Vălean, Renate Weber, Ramona Mănescu, Cristian Bușoi and Ben-Oni Ardelean.

**7 May – House of Parliament** – PNȚCD has launched its list of candidates for the European Parliament elections. Approximately 800 people participated to the event. The first four candidates on the list are: Marian Petre Miluț, President of PNȚCD, Eugen Romulus Moiescu, Florin Diaconu and Mircea Scheau. The PNȚCD campaign for the European Parliament took place under the slogan “PNȚCD REPRESENTS YOU”.

**8 May – Romexpo, Bucharest** – PSD+PC political alliance has launched its candidates for the European Parliament elections. Approximately 7000 people participated to the event. The first 11 candidates on the PSD+PC list are: Adrian Severin, Rovana Plumb, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Silvia Țicău, Daciana Sârbu, Corina Crețu, Victor Boștinăru, Sabin Cutaș (PC), Cătălin Ivan, Ioan Enciu and Viorica Dăncilă.

**9 May – Bucharest** – Four political groups represented in the European Parliament: **PSD, in an electoral alliance with PC, PD-L, PNL and UDMR**, as well as other four parties without representation in the EP: **PRM, the Ecologist Party, the Green Party and PNȚ-CD** – have put in their candidates lists for the European Parliament at the Central Electoral Bureau (BEC). **BEC** spokesman, Mr. Marian Muhuleț, has declared that within the legal term three independent candidates also put in their candidature at **BEC: Elena Bănescu, Mihaela Mihai and Pavel Abraham.**

**9 May – Palace Hall, Bucharest** – Launching of the PD-L candidates with the special participation of president Traian Bănescu. Almost 5000 PD-L members participated in the

event. The first ten candidates on the list are Theodor Stolojan, Monica Macovei, Cristian Preda, Traian Ungureanu, Marian Jean Marinescu, Iosif Matula, Sebastian Bodu, Petru Luhan, Rareș Niculescu and Oana Antonescu.

**9 May – Iași** – Launching of the PSD+PC candidates in the Exposition Park. Mircea Geoană, president of PSD, also participated, in order to support the local candidate Cătălin Ivan, positioned 9<sup>th</sup> on the candidates list.

**11 May – Satu Mare** – MEP Adrian Severin, head of the PSD list for the European Parliament has declared, during a press conference, that president Traian Băsescu aims a sanctioning of Romania by the European Union, in order to use this in the presidential elections. Among the partisans of sanctions for Romania were Monica Macovei and other friends of hers from PD-L.

**14 May – Romexpo, Bucharest** – The PSD+PC National Council takes place, with the participation of the candidates for the European Parliament, PSD ministers and PSD members of the county organizations. In the presence of 10000 people, the extended National Council launched the electoral strategy and the candidates. The candidature of Mircea Geoană for presidential elections was also announced.

**14 May – Oradea** – Tokes Laszlo and Szilagyi Zsolt, candidates for the European Parliament of the “solidarity list” declared that a “purification phenomenon takes place” concerning Hungarians in the local administration, which is aimed at preventing minorities from achieving cultural autonomy. The two leaders criticized in a press conference the changes in the direction of local public services.

**15 May – Bucharest** – The PRM president, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, declared that he has no money and that he does not want to organise the launching of his party’s candidates for the European elections yet, but that he will consult his close councillors, considering that it is ideal for the event to take place towards the end of the campaign, because “the last impression matters most”.

**17 May – Sibiu** – PSD launches its candidates for the European elections in Sibiu, the main candidates representing this area being Ioan Mircea Pașcu, current MEP, and Sabin Cutaș (PC).

**19 May – Paris, France** – In a visit to the Romanian embassy in Paris, Traian Băsescu declared: *I have disappointed myself*, concerning the 2008 ruling solution and bringing PSD to the government. Also, the President advised Romanians, in his discourse at the meeting with representatives of the Romanian community of Paris, to participate in the elections for the European Parliament on 7 June, be it only for casting a blank vote or not as the turnout represents attachment to European values.

**19 May – Spain** – PD-L announces the establishment of a new party organisation for the Diaspora. The president of the PD-L Diaspora organization, MP William Brânză, announced that the target if the party for Diaspora is to get over 60% of votes.

**24 May – Brașov** – Monica Macovei declared in Brașov, at the launching of democratic liberal candidates, that the competing parties, PSD and PNL, are not credible as *they only stop files in justice and defend the corrupted*.

**25 May – House of Parliament** – President Traian Băsescu invited PD-L MPs to discussions regarding the economic evolution and problems they face in the uninominal constituencies.

**27 May** – PES publishes a list of the worst 12 candidatures for the European elections, in which the PD-L candidate, Monica Macovei, appears (on the sixth place), but also the

Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi (first place). Monica Macovei's candidature was considered one of the worst because of her controversial mandate at the Ministry of Justice and for the fact that she criticized her country on every occasion.

**27 May** – The Government modified, through an emergency decree the law regarding elections for the European Parliament and stated that the identity of people voting on additional lists will be checked in the residing place, in order to avoid electoral fraud in the 7 June elections. The sanction for this offence is imprisonment.

**28 May – Bucharest** – Televised debate with the participation of Adrian Severin (PSD+PC), Norica Nicolai (PNL), Monica Macovei (PD-L) and Iuliu Winkler (UDMR).

**28 May – Bucharest** – Elena Băsescu declared that she would support within the European Parliament a project for legalizing soft drugs, during the TV show “Vorbe Grele” (“Hard Talk”) on *Antena 2* channel.

**30 May – Bucharest** – The PRM president announced that his party will no longer organize a launching of its candidates because of lacking funds. On the PRM list for the European elections the top spots are occupied by the party president, Corneliu Vadim Tudor and by the businessman George Becali. They are followed by the physician Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu, son of Dan Claudiu Tănăsescu, former mayor of a little town near Bucharest, the former UNESCO Ambassador Eugen Mihăescu, Professor Angela Bălan, journalist Dumitru Avram and former Senator Dan Zamfirescu.

**30 May – Târgu Mureş** – MEP Adrian Severin raised a question mark concerning the elaboration of the justice report for Romania by European officials. Adrian Severin wondered why the report on Justice is coordinated by the Secretary General of the European Commission and not by the European Commissioner for Justice, Jacques Barrot.

**31 May and 1<sup>st</sup> June** – In an interview for *Cotidianul* daily newspaper, Monica Macovei accused Adrian Severin that, by the way in which he acts he is no more but an *attorney for the PSD members under judicial investigation*. During a show at *Realitatea TV*, Monica Macovei continued the series of attacks against MEP Adrian Severin, qualifying his declarations concerning the European Commissioner for Justice, Jacques Barrot, as *a major mistake that will cost us all*.

**3 June – Cotroceni Palace, Bucharest** – President Traian Băsescu advised Romanians to vote in the 7 June European elections. The head of state said that, first of all, voters should come to cast their ballots as a sign of respect for what the European Union has done and will be doing for Romanians.

**4 June – Iraq** – President Traian Băsescu paid a visit to Romanian troops at the military basis of Tallil, where he participated to the official ceremony of closure of the Romanian mission to Iraq. The programme also included a visit to Baghdad, where a bilateral meeting with the Iraqi president and local leaders took place.

**4 June** – PSD candidate for the European Parliament, Adrian Severin, answered the accusations of the PD-L candidate, Monica Macovei, declaring that she is part of an intellectual group which have a “fascist leaning”.

**6 June – 7 AM** – The electoral campaign for the European elections is closing. After the closure of the electoral campaign and until the end of the voting process, TV and radio stations cannot broadcast electoral shows anymore, as defined by the National Council of the Audiovisual.

**6 June – Afghanistan** – President Traian Băsescu visited the military basis of Qalat, where he decorated the fighting flag of Battalion 21 Mountain Troops.

**7 June – Bucharest** – The President of the Senate, PSD leader Mircea Geoană, announced that he would retire from the Supreme Council for National Defence (CSAT), invoking the fact that he does not approve the use of the Army's positive image for electoral and partisan purposes by president Băsescu, referring to *electoral actions* of the head of state during the last days.

**7 June – Bucharest** – President Traian Băsescu did some shopping on Sunday afternoon at the *Carrefour Orhideea* hypermarket. He did not want to comment on the retirement announcement of PSD president, Mircea Geoană from the vice-chairmanship of CSAT.

**7 June – 9 PM** – The end of the voting process for the election of Romanian MEPs.