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LGBT Rights in Romania

Combating discrimination

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He killed himself because he could not bear the pressure of isolation and fear. I had lived with the hope that one day we would stand together again. I loved him tremendously and could not believe I had lost him. But destiny took away this last hope. . . . A part of me went into the earth with him: what continues to live is surrounded by hatred and disgrace. It is too difficult to live in a society sick with prejudice, which condemns you for things that should carry no dishonor and cause no guilt

Ciprian Cucu

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Introduction

This research work is made on the sequence of the “Seminar on the Political Systems of Central and Eastern Europe”, it is a research on politics and specific aspects on the social life of Romania.

One of the Countries that lived under the hard rule of Communism during the second half of the 20th Century, in Romania, individual freedoms were not even subjects that could possibly fought for till the Revolution of 1989 that took Nicolae Ceausescu from power.

Nowadays Romania is a democratic and social State, based on the Rule of Law in which the dignity and freedom of citizens, the auto-determination, justice and political pluralism are supreme values consecrated, as rights, in the Romanian Constitution and legislation.

Despite this contemporary atmosphere, many are the contradictions overlapping the country’s society notions of basic rights. In fact, from being the country with the biggest number of cases in the European Court of Human Rights¹ due to the deaths of the Revolution, to the infection in hospitals of 10 thousand children, from 1986 to 1991, with HIV², Romania is still processing the modern logics of social statements.

In what concerns discrimination, one of the most relevant cases is the “Article 200” from 1968; on it was stated the criminalization of homosexuality till 1996, in a first stage, and till 2001 despite of being consented in a private sphere. The law was changed under pressure of the Council of Europe.

Hypothesis

This work tries to verify of the common idea of discrimination problems towards LGBT people in Romania are, in fact, true.

Methodology

This research aims to translate and decode the reality of LGBT in Romania as it was seen *in loco*. To do so it starts with an explanation of the historical and legal frame of Gay rights, followed by the description of the organisations that are now present in the society to deal with discrimination and promote tolerance.

¹ <http://www.presseurop.eu/en/content/news-brief-cover/98511-bucharest-seeks-justice-strasbourg>

² <http://www.hrw.org/news/2008/05/04/universal-periodic-review-romania>

As a term of comparison with an intermediate side of the spectrum, there will be throughout the text residual comparisons with Portugal, as it is considered important to make up an average level of acceptance of the community in other European countries.

To highlight the conclusions of the research, an interview will be made to the creator of the weblog DarQ, the biggest Romanian blog on LGBT rights. A description of the research trip and a personal critical approach will be made as conclusion of the perspective on how LGBT live in Romania.

Historical Approach

The first text regarding same sex relationships was issued in 1864, being all homosexual acts forbidden by the Penal Code. In 1936, The Parliament of Romania, by that time a Monarchy, voted a new law on sexual intercourses, making new definitions and categories of normalization. There were two main categories, “Infractions against decency” – rape, seduction and paedophilia – and “Infractions against good values” as obscene publications, prostitution and:

Article 431 “Acts of sexual inversion committed between men or between women, if provoking public scandal” are punished with imprisonment “from 6 months to 2 years”

However, homosexual acts were allowed in the absolute private sphere. This is where the problem starts to rely since the notion of public and private sphere was yet to be clarified. It was with the beginning of the dictatorship of King Karol II that the notion of private sphere became nullified.

1968 – The Article 200

Article 200 came into force in 1968 in the beginning of the Ceausescu era. It clearly represents the pursuit and persecution of homosexuals during this regime, since it was the will of the dictator himself. This Article was part of a code of “Infraction involving Sexual Life” and was an enforcement of the Law of 1936.

Article 200/§1/1968

“Sexual relations between people of the same sex are punished by imprisonment of 1 to 5 years”

§4

“Inciting or encouraging a person to practice of sexual relations between people of the same sex is punished by imprisonment of 1 to 5 years”

In 1996, after international pressure, §1 was amended so that it would now state:

“Same sex relations taking place in public or resulting in public scandal shall be punished from 1 to 5 years”

In fact, this wasn't a major development and, on the other side, §4 was amended to a more strict regulation:

“Inciting or encouraging a person to practice of sexual relations between people of the same sex, as well as propaganda or association or any other kind of proselytising with the same scope shall be punished by imprisonment of 1 to 5 years”

A series of stories and cases happened after the Resolution, showing the few improvements made during the first years of the new regime.

One of the cases with more visibility was the Ciprian Cucu and Marian Mustascu³:

In 1992, Ciprian Cucu, seventeen, was in the last year of high school in Sinnicolau Mare, a town near the Hungarian border. Isolated and lonely, in November 1992 he placed a personal advertisement in a Timisoara daily newspaper. The ad was titled "November dream"; in it, he asked to meet someone interested in "long-term friendship." The ad was subtly phrased to indicate his homosexuality. The advertisement was answered by Marian Mutascu of Timisoara, twenty-two. Mutascu later said of their meeting, "I knew at once that this was the man and this was the way of life for me." They lived together for almost two months, at first staying in Mutascu's flat, which he shared with his mother; later, they moved to Cucu's family's home in Sinnicolau Mare. They were forced to hide their relationship from family members. Eventually, however, Cucu's older sister and her husband became suspicious. The sister herself reported their relationship to the police. The two were arrested in January 1993. According to Cucu, "I was the first one to be interrogated. The investigators called me a 'whore' repeatedly... Marian admitted everything during the interrogation. I tried to deny it, until I was shown my diary, which had been brought to the police by my sister. Then I realized that I would lose everything."

³ http://accept-romania.ro/images/stories/public_scandals.pdf

From Sinnicolau Mare they were taken to Timisoara. "Many police officers gathered to laugh at us," Ciprian states. Then we were taken to the county police lockup. On finding out the reason why we had been arrested, the warden of the lockup (known as the "karate man") jumped on Marian, kicking him in the mouth and stomach. He continued to kick him even after Marian fell down and lost consciousness. I was only insulted and mocked repeatedly.

Marian and I were separated. I was taken to the pre-trial detention ward for juveniles. My cell had six beds in which, during the two months I was incarcerated, up to sixteen suspects at a time slept. Before I came into the cell, officers told the supervising inmate that a homosexual was going to be put in the room. As a result, he told me from the very start that I had to have sex with him if I did not want things to go very badly. At first I resisted, but after a few blows, I was forced to give in. It was the first time I was raped--but not the last. In the course of the following month, he forced me to have sex with other inmates as well, while the other colleagues watched the "show."

During their first month in jail, both Cucu and Mutascu were forced to undergo a painful and humiliating medical examination of their genital and anal areas. "The forensic report said they could not prove I had had sex with another man," Cucu says. "But both the prosecutor and the forensic doctor insisted on discovering 'who was the active and who was the passive' in my relations with Marian." Both Amnesty International and the Romanian Helsinki Committee moved to defend the two. Cucu was released from pre-trial detention after two months. Mutascu, however, was detained for another two months. After developing a severe and disfiguring skin infection on his legs and feet, he was finally released on May 22. The two came to trial on June 9. Both were convicted; Mutascu received two years' imprisonment, and Cucu one year. Largely due to intensive pressure from the international community, these sentences were suspended. Their ordeal was not over. Cucu was expelled from his school, "because teachers declared my homosexuality a danger to the other students." Employers, alerted by publicity, refused to hire Mutascu. When he managed to find a job, fellow workers' harassment drove him from it. In May, 1995, Marian Mutascu committed suicide.

Article 200 was repealed in 2001 giving freedom of association to LGBT NGO's and to the promotion of information on anti-discrimination, respect and tolerance.

The Legal frame

Constitutions are the supreme Law of a State, the symbol of legality, the recognition of right and equality. The Romanian Constitution, in the point of right to identity, omits the right of sexual orientation. It states:

/Article 6

“The State recognizes and guarantees the rights of persons belonging to national minorities to the preservation, development and expression of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity”

On the other side, the Portuguese Constitution states:

/Article 13, 2

“2. No one shall be privileged, favoured, prejudiced, deprived of any right or exempted from any duty on the basis of ancestry, sex, race, language, place of origin, religion, political or ideological beliefs, education, economic situation, social circumstances or sexual orientation.”

The fact the Portuguese Constitution is objective on this specific right is a matter of State recognition of a LGBT person, a way of ensuring equality in a broad sense and not only in anti-discrimination, it is a full respect to the community and to the individuals.

Back to Romania, the new Civil Code that entered in force on the 1st October 2011 states in the Article 277 the prohibition of same-sex partnership and marriage, even when realized abroad.

Article 277 RCC states: ‘(1) Same-sex marriage is prohibited. (2) Same-sex marriages concluded or contracted abroad, either by Romanian or foreign citizens, are not recognised in Romania. (3) Civil partnerships between persons of the opposite sex or same sex, concluded or contracted abroad, either by Romanian or foreign citizens, are not recognised in Romania. (4) Legal provisions on free movement of citizens in Romania, for citizens from EU Member States and from the European Economic Area, remain applicable.’

This matter was already issue during a session of the European Parliament, when the Greens and the ALE Group asked the Commission, showing their concern towards the legality of the

law taking in consideration EU treaties and the possible rise of homophobia and discrimination.

Whereas, the Portuguese Civil Code assures since 1976 civil partnerships of couples of different sex, however the official name dates 1999. In May 2001 the law was amended so that it would give the same statute to homosexual couples.

In June 2010 the first gay marriage was celebrated after the law was approved by the majority government.

Article 1577 PCC “The marriage is the contract between two people who want a family through a full communion of life”

Parenting rights are, however, denied in both countries.

The anti-discrimination law in both countries suits the European Union demands, as it is an obligation for any Member State, however in Romania the implementation of the law is still not satisfactory.

In what concerns employment, the Romanian Governments have been raising the harmonization between national and European law, as also a condition to become an EU member, starting in 2000 till 2006, so that the discrimination rate of homosexuals in their jobs would decrease⁴. It is criminalized in Law 324/2006

“any difference, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, social status, beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, chronic disease, HIV positive status, belonging to a disadvantaged group or any other criterion, aiming to or resulting in a restriction or prevention of the equal recognition, use or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social and cultural field or in any other fields of public life”

Freedom of Assembly

Article 39

⁴ In December 2005, NCCD published the results of an official survey stating that 61 per cent of the interviewees avoid having relations with homosexuals. This is the highest rejection percentage, Roma ranking second with 34 per cent and persons living with HIV/AIDS ranking third with 26 per cent.

“Public meetings, processions, demonstrations or any other assembly shall be free and may be organized and held peacefully”

The cases:

First LGBT Pride march in Bucharest, May 2005

Around 500 people participated in the first gay fest, marked, firstly, by the Mayor of Bucharest that didn't authorise them to march downtown as security was not assured. However there is not one of the exceptions considered in the law. After political pressure and international lobbying the Mayor finally accepted the realization of the first Romanian Gay Pride.

However, the Parade was disrupted by the anti-gay protesters, more than a thousand people that marched along. Eggs, stones, plastic bottles were thrown towards the peaceful gay Pride. 51 people were detained, but none of them for the homophobic speech that is forbidden by the anti-discrimination law neither by the use of Nazi symbols and other fascist codes. There were no criminal investigation, neither any of the detainees were brought to Court.

Gay Parades in Bucharest continued since so, however every year with fewer participants as, possibly, security is an issue. In 2006, six participants criminally complained as they were aggressed, after the march, in the metro station; again nothing was concluded. In 2007 two policemen were caught carrying stones and throwing them to the gay march. Just in 2011 the march went peacefully without any major occurrence. At the same time it is also important to highlight that the Anti-gay protests are becoming less and less visible every year.

However the Criminal Law of Romania protects the demonstrators and not those that promote discrimination using fascist symbols and spread fascist slogans, those seem to be the most protected.

In what concerns Portugal, the first public demonstration took place in 1974 and after in other events as the 1st of May. But it was in 2000 that LGBT and other supporters first went downtown Lisbon showing they were there. Today almost every city has its own parade with more than a total of 5000 people every year.

Anti-Discrimination Organizations

Governmental

The National Council on combating Discrimination NCCD

The NCCD was a law resolution of 2000, but just got into practice in 2001. With time it became one of the most important voices in combating discrimination and breaking some of the limitations of the law.

The NCCD is now an independent organ, under the control of the Parliament. It is asked to propose and drafts laws that ensure a higher coherence of the anti-discrimination law. It is also empowered to develop information campaigns that promote tolerance among all Romanian citizens.

The first case having wide media coverage was held against TAROM, the Romanian Airlines⁵. In 2005 it decided to make a promotion for Valentine's Day that officially excluded same-sex couples. TAROM got an "Administrative fine of 5,000,000 ROL⁶ (EUR 143 Euro) and recommendation for the company to organise training on equal opportunities and anti-discrimination principles.

Non-Governmental Organisations

ACCEPT

ACCEPT is one of the most relevant players in the debate on LGBT discrimination in Romania. Its story starts in 1994 as a group of people willing to talk about the subject, which happened, for the first time, in 1995 in a symposium attended by important political figures, Human Rights Associations and even representatives of the Orthodox Church.

This meeting was the beginning of the collaboration of volunteers engaged to the topic. In 1996, ACCEPT became an official and registered Human Rights organization.

ACCEPT had a decisive position in the repeal of Article 200 and in the promotion of anti-discrimination campaigns.

⁵ Romania/CNCD/ Tarom Decision, decision 39 (01.03.2005)

⁶ Old Leu – 1RON=10,000ROL

Its role is recognized by everyone fighting for equality of LGBTs, including the European Institutions, as it was awarded the 1999 prize “EGALTE” in the European Commission, being also nominated for the Sacharov Prize of the same year by the European Parliament.

Since 2004, ACCEPT is organising the most important events such as the first Festival of Diversity in 2004 “that included a gay film festival, a photo and a poster exhibition, book launches, public debates and a gay party”⁷.

The NGO is also responsible for organizing the first Gay Pride in 2005 and the ones that followed it.

At the present times, ACCEPT has a wide range of activities, from lobbying and legal actions, elaboration of reports on the different issues concerning the community, elaboration of informative brochures, revision of media references so that the professionalism and non discrimination are assured, participation in different programmes when required or as an educative mean. It is also responsible for supporting other LGBT movements and private initiatives.

Focusing on Portugal, the country has an equivalent of the Romanian National Council for Combating Discrimination: the Cabinet for Equality and the Secretary of State of Equality. However, this last one very much criticized by its representative, Teresa Morais, that was a strong opponent of the legalisation of Gay Marriage and had doubts on the change of sex and updating the name register by transsexual people⁸.

There are as well different NGO’s of which should be mentioned “ex-aequo”, focused on LGBT and friends from 16 to 30 years old, “Opus Gay”, for everyone, “Clube Safo”, the only dedicated to lesbian and “Panteras Rosa” that are strong activists in fighting homo and transphobia.

⁷ <http://accept-romania.ro/en/despre-noi/istoric/>

⁸ <http://dezanove.pt/204427.html>

But how does Romania see sexual minorities?

The facts

According to the survey “Discrimination phenomenon in Romania”⁹

- Most of Romanians consider themselves as tolerant
- 18% of people say discrimination is very often in Romania, 44% often
- 31% of people considers after entering in EU discrimination increased and 45% stays it keeps the same level, 27% also thinks it will grow and 42% say it will be the same
- In what concerns LGBT's, discrimination is seen as increased 34%, or staying in the same level 45%
- LGBT people are the most discriminated group of the society
- 61% of people consider the discrimination rate is high or very high
- 57% consider it is harder for a gay person to find a job
- Over 50% of people think gay people are discriminated inadvertently
- 55% consider young gay people are discriminated in schools
- 55% show being uncomfortable when dealing daily with a gay person
- 56% wouldn't eat with a gay person
- 85% wouldn't drink from the same glass as a gay person
- 85% of people would feel offended if a gay person would flirt to them
- 75% of people would be disturbed to find out someone of their family is gay
- 58% of people would feel uncomfortable if their family doctor would be gay
- 54% would feel disturbed if they would see two men holding hands
- 90% wouldn't accept having a gay in their circle of closest friends

⁹NCCD - October/November 2010 – 1400 men and women, citizens of Romania, over 18, living in urban and rural areas

Interview with the creator of DarkQ weblog

How did you come up with the idea of blogging about Romanian Gay life?

Back in 2007 I was living in a small town where there was nothing close to what we usually call "gay scene". Not that me and my partner desperately needed the presence of gay people in our lives, but sometimes you feel incomplete without the possibility to have gay friends with whom to share your thoughts. Oh, and of course there are certain things that only a gay friend would understand.

While I was lacking this gay communication thingy, I came up with the idea of creating DarkQ, a weblog. The concept slowly developed and more and more gay people wanted to write about different LGBT issues they were facing.

I see you have some very interesting interviews. Would you imagine it would become as big as it is now?

Yes, we have many interesting articles and posts. All these were written by several hundred authors who registered in those 5 years and who felt that DarkQ is the place to be. We also had many parents that were seeking some answers related to their gay children.

At first I did not imagine that DarkQ will become what is today, but this trend can only make me feel happy.

Do you realize you may be helping younger people that are just now discovering their sexuality?

Of course I do realise. A blog like this one would have been of great help back in the 2000s when I was an adolescent and I was wondering about the reason as to why I was looking after boys. The Internet wasn't what it is today. I don't think the concept of blogging existed either.

How would you characterize the gay blogging atmosphere in Romania?

First, a gay blog being a niche I could say that it separates itself automatically from the blogging community. We frequently receive comments from homophobes to various articles that are not the very nice. But from my point of view the real problem lies in the fact that competition exists in this field as well.

Usually gay blog owners don't link back to you, don't mention you when citing the source of an article; only so that they don't help. The same goes with social networks - everybody is on their own, which is a pity when LGBT organisations are **supposed** to fight for "unity".

Do you consider yourself a gay activist?

No, absolutely not. I do what I do out of pleasure. If by doing this I trigger even a small change in someone's way of thinking, if others see that we're people with a brain and we're not "abnormal" like many heterosexual believe - then I'm happy.

Do you have any support of ACCEPT or any other organization?

No. The pro-LGBT organisations/foundations in Romania (Accept, PSI and Act-Q) have their own path, their own projects that are run as they see fit.

I was never supported by any organisation (either morally or financially). I could say that it was rather the opposite since DarkQ is a blog that prefers to call things by their name, which doesn't appeal to many people.

Do you take part in events organization?

Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. Blogging being a hobby for me, time doesn't allow me to participate to every event organised;

In what concerns the history of LGBT rights in Romania, do you think the repeal of article 200 was enough to promote tolerance?

It was enough to set grounds for it but not promote it. Of course, it was a good and rightful thing to do. However, that didn't stop insults, beatings nor changed the opinion about being gay of the general public. There's still a long way to go until we reach "tolerance".

Is the Romanian Society as closed as it is perceived outside?

Yes it is. Romania is a very conservative country and this conservatism is helped by BOR (Romanian Orthodox Church) and the New Right (an extreme right political party) which

strongly oppose every attempt to open people's eyes by even just a little and to make them more tolerant towards their own kind.

The advertised "right thing" is the family with children, humbleness and lack of any strong personal opinion about something.

Why do you think Romania doesn't have such a progressive approach towards LGBT community? As for example it is not in the Constitution the right to sexual orientation.

Again, conservatism plays a big role in this. So does orthodox religion which here is extremely popular. People almost fear of being perceived as not religious by others, even if their beliefs towards LGBT don't actually clash with being religious. As such, governments tend to postpone LGBT legislation change or strip out of a constitutional change LGBT specific wording fearing that they will be voted down at the next elections or being considered themselves gay.

How is it to be gay in Romania? How do people meet and where? Is the internet seen as the safest way of meeting people? And if you are in Bucharest hand by hand with someone, what do you think would be the reaction of most people? Would you be afraid?

Tough question. To be gay in Romania is an adventure in all aspects. Many still hide themselves and are embarrassed by whom they really are. Others marry the opposite sex only for appearances. Too few are those who accept their true selves. As such, the Internet remains for many the only viable possibility (from their point of view) to express their sexuality.

And maybe for a good reason since there were cases when gay people were insulted or even beaten up. The life of a gay person in Romania bounces between dating websites and gay clubs.

Don't you think that, as it is stated by ACCEPT, saying "Gay people are different and should be accepted as so" is a contradiction? How can LGBT base their speech of equality in rights and duties based on difference in the specific context of traditional Romania?

Yeah, you are right. I strongly agree that as long as we're saying we are "different" we practically contribute to being discriminated.

You see, from my point of view LGBT organisations in Romania lack people trained in sociology or sexual psychology. You cannot appear on TV and launch in a debate arguing that we are different and the people are close minded for not accepting something else.

I would like to see representatives of the gay community in Romania that did their homework before going and self proclaiming a gay community spokesman.

Do you think all the progress made and even the speech of your President, in 2004, supporting Gay marriage was just a game to have less problems in entering EU?

Entering the EU changed a lot of laws and made a lot of people shift gears prior to that. From this point of view the president made a lot of statements that were meant to show the EU that Romania was ready and worthy to be a member state. All the progress however? Unlikely. Progress doesn't come just from the government or the head of state. It also comes from regular people like us. Writers of DarkQ didn't mean to have less problems in entering the EU, of course :)

How do you see the future of LGBT in Romania?

I think that progress is sometimes blurred by what people perceive as "correct" or "proper". People need to understand that love doesn't have gender preferences; that homosexuals are nothing less than heterosexuals. Romania needs to fight to reach a level where gay people have the courage to assume their sexuality, to get out in the open and not be ashamed of who they are. But overall, things are moving in the right direction.

Discovering Romania

7th November to 14th November 2011

The Université Libre de Bruxelles gave 15 students the great opportunity of travelling to Romania on what became an imperative research trip to understand the realities of Romania.

Many stories I heard before flying to Romania, insecurity, Mafia, dogs, friends of friends that were almost kidnapped, gypsies, low prices, very conservative. As so my expectation was very high, I wanted to see by myself what was really true. And I was amazed.

The first things I noticed when I arrived to Bucharest, around 6pm, were pretty modern buildings, modern buses, people everywhere, a nice first impression. I got the first shock when I discovered there were no timetables for public transportation, but happy that, in opposition to Brussels, there are night public transports.

We entered the bus towards the city, I liked everything I saw, but suddenly I realize that many of the central areas didn't have illumination, for what they were looking very sad. We walked till the Hostel, somewhere 15 minutes from the city centre. To be honest, I don't have a visual memory of the places I saw by the first time, as I was trying to see everything at the same time, as I usually do when I'm somewhere for the first time. I was also quite ill so the only thing I was waiting for was the warm interior of the Hostel – Funky Chicken it was -, it was actually the perfect place, warm, just for us, really nice people working there, good atmosphere and very well located. After leaving our stuff we went to a traditional restaurant where we could taste traditional Romanian food, the mamalyga became my favourite. The first night finished for me, as did also my peaceful point of view on Romania.

The first “real” day came along with a shiny sun and a bright sky. We had our first lecture with Ms. Ruxandra Ivan, a specialist on Romanian foreign relations. We were told what are her points of view on the role of European Union in Romania, appearing to be very critical of the system; and also how she sees the relations with Moldova, a country, as said, “where people live well”. In this moment I told I had the opportunity of asking months before to Mr. Vlad Filat the view of Moldovans on EU integration and that I was told 60% were willing to integrate. I asked Ms. Ivan her opinion on this, I got a simple “Mr. Filat was joking.”.

During the afternoon we met Flavia Preda from the Resource Centre for Public Participation, there I started to realize the need of experts Romania has as also it needs serious measures to diminish corruption so that it can get more than the current 5 to 14% of EU funds.

In the end of the first day I already knew more or less where I was, in the city plan, but also politically. The city I was seeing was a mix between beauty and history with a Ceausescu-ish

kind of megalomania, mainly when I saw for the first time from outside the now building of the Parliament.

The second day was marked by two very surprising meetings, the first with ACCEPT, as explained before a Romanian LGBT rights association, there I was amazed with the statistics showed, but that was a minor surprise comparing to the way the organization is fighting discrimination. According to Irina Nita “homosexuals are different and they should be accepted for who they are”, I obviously agree they should, in any case, be accepted as they are, but not because they are different, because they are equal to everyone. It is because we, Humans, are all equal that we all have the right to the same rights and obligations and it is because we don't often remember our equality that the world is not a better place.

The second surprise came from the Institute of Diplomacy, a governmental institution that prepares expertise reports on various topics on foreign relations when asked by that Ministry to do so. During the conversation there were many questions that I couldn't understand the answer, or because it wasn't very affirmative or because it seemed to exist a pre notion that, as we heard for the second time “the best neighbour of Romania is the Black Sea”.

The third meeting was held in RFI, a French/Romanian speaking radio, with Lucas Niculascu that told us something more about the present political and media context, as, for example, the propaganda made by the different channels. The day ended in the Faculty of Political Sciences attending a lecture on “Aquis Communautaire”.

After 2 days and half I could already feel the atmosphere of a country still in transition, where fundamental rights are in the paper, but not so much in the reality, Not only because of politicians, but also for the low interest of Romanian society in the public life.

The next day had one of the most important meetings of the trip, the meeting in the “Institute for Investigation of Communist Crimes and for the Memory of Romanian Exile”, during which I understood that most of the people previously part of the Communist party are still politically involved and in important places, which makes it not possible to ask the Constitutional Court to make public the old archives, as they would be the first people to be judge.

Following we had a very clarifying meeting with a representative of the Roma minority, in the Rahova district, we were explained the biggest concerns and shown the stories by the history.

In the end of the day we went again to the Faculty of Political Sciences where we met Prof. Alexandra Ionescu to whom I had the pleasure of asking several questions. After so many meetings in Romania this was the most open as it was on the basis of question/answer and it allowed taking all the doubts and making a syntheses of the knowledge acquired during the other sessions.

The last day in Bucharest had a great touch of the things I didn't like, starting with the outrageous building of the Parliament, it is the perfect image of the "Ceausescu dream", I was astonished with the luxury, the crystals that weight several tones, the pink marble everywhere, the size of the rooms, the handmade carpet of 2 tones, the glass roof to enter a helicopter and even with the avenue that is said to be 3 meters longer than the Champs Élysées on propose. How many people died building it? How is it possible to spend 3 million Euros per year just with water and electricity, if outside there are so many problems to solve, so many electric cables to take from the sidewalks, so many dogs that need to have a place to stay, not to talk about the thousands of people living with difficulties? How is it possible?

The last of all meetings was with a Professor of the National School of Political Sciences and Administration to talk about the different topics of concern in Romania. The very perspective of United States partnership was showed to be more valuable than the EU integration, the demand for security from the neighbours is, indeed, a big topic in the country. When coming to internal issues, among other topics, I was mainly surprised to listen that in 2006 the country had an unemployment rate of 0%, which I thought impossible and, also surprisingly, it increased to 7% in 2008.

During the evening we were presented with a great dinner in the city centre gathering everyone that was there with us making of this trip a huge success. At night we saw how frenetic and exciting the night life in Bucharest may be. A great experience.

Saturday came with a new breeze, we went to Brasov, an amazing city with incredible views from the mountains, totally different from Bucharest.

On Sunday we got back home, Brussels, and I had made up my own idea of Romania. Dogs and corruption may be a problem, but I hope youngsters to become more proactive in the progression of the Romanian society, forming their own movements and parties so that the country can have a bright future.

Conclusion

Romania is nowadays, and still, a country where minorities are screaming for help. But this help and subsequent change of consciousness doesn't come just from the Government, it comes mainly from the LGBT community, it needs to show its engagement in different topics of social life. There must be openness from the politicians, opinion makers, even celebrities to come out and defend this minority. On the other side, the Gay community must have conscience of its duty and show they have the right to have rights, not just by Pride marches, but also by political involvement and effective informative campaigns. People need to know they have gay friends and that they are not the deviants the law made of them for many decades.

This research is a beginning of a wider study that can include information that is just available in Romanian and also that will be able of including more information on the transgender issue, that deserves a more specific and detailed approach as well as more testimonials of Romanian LGBT.

To finish it is important to emphasize the collaboration and solicitude of the creator of the DarkQ's gay blog. Without his help this paper wouldn't be as meaningful as desired.

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