



Quarterly Report
ROMANIA: POLITICAL PARTY EXCHANGE PROGRAM
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I. SUMMARY

In the aftermath of the June 2000 local elections, the reform-oriented parties of the ruling coalition have been involved in several last-ditch efforts to chip away at the Social Democracy Party of Romania's (PDSR) commanding lead in the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections. Attempts at forging electoral alliances have proven problematic, and disputes have arisen over which presidential candidates to support. Current trends portend a mixed prognosis for Romania's democratic transition: a more stable government coalition is likely to evolve, but its commitment to democratic norms is uncertain.

Political instability is a symptom of Romania's weak political leadership. Winner-take-all attitudes are common among an older generation of politicians who continue to monopolize party leadership positions. The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has concluded that an effective way to promote change and strengthen political parties is to help young party members assume higher profiles within their respective organizations. The Political Party Exchange (PPE) Program provides young political leaders with election-related and party organizing skills to prepare them for active political participation. Training centers around study missions to the United States. The first study mission on electoral strategy took place in November 1999, and the second mission on voter contact and field operations occurred in March 2000. Parliamentary and presidential elections in November 2000 offer participants the opportunity to implement skills learned and to rise within their parties' ranks.

During this quarter, the following was accomplished:

- NDI distributed questionnaires to program graduates in order to track their progress in implementing individual projects;
- Several PPE graduates participated in trainings for NDI's summer Youth Election School; and
- All 12 participants for the third U.S.-based study mission were selected.

II. BACKGROUND

Political instability within Romania's current ruling coalition has caused the country's democratic transition to falter. Having united solely to defeat the Social Democracy Party of Romania (PDSR) in the 1996 elections, coalition partners have rankled over the allotment of ministerial positions and over such key legislation as privatization and land restitution. The PDSR's resounding victory in the June 2000 local elections and panic over national elections scheduled for November 26 have increased the discord within the coalition, almost guaranteeing a PDSR victory in the parliamentary elections and strengthening Ion Iliescu's standing in the presidential contest.

Sensing an impending political disaster with polls showing PDSR poised to capture between 45 and 49 percent of the vote in the parliamentary elections, the National Liberal Party (PNL) decided to opt out of the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR) electoral coalition and began to negotiate with ApR on a possible alliance. Disagreements over whether ApR Party Chairman Teodor Melescanu or former Premier Teodor Stolojan (PNL) would represent both parties as the presidential candidate proved insurmountable and ended any hopes for an alliance. The other main CDR partner, the Peasant Party (PNTCD) reconstituted the Democratic Convention as the CDR 2000 together with the Union of Right-Wing Forces (UFD), the National Christian Democratic Alliance (ANCD), the Romanian Ecologist Federation (FER) and the Moldavian Party.

In July, President Emil Constantinescu (PNTCD) announced he would not seek re-election. Several parties, including PNTCD and PNL, attempted to recruit Premier Mugur Isarescu as their presidential candidate. In September, Isarescu announced he would run for president, but as an independent candidate. PNTCD supports his candidacy, but PNL put forth its own candidate, former Prime Minister Teodor Stolojan.

Attempts at forging an alliance with ApR and the refusal of the PNL leadership to back Isarescu in the end created a rift within the Liberal Party. Several senior PNL officials, including Finance Minister Decebal Traian Remes, accused the party of losing its liberal qualities and opposed the party's support of Stolojan's candidacy over Isarescu. Initially, the faction refused to recognize the party leadership but soon after resigned from the party and created a splinter party, PNL-the Bratianus, named after the Bratianu family that led the Liberal Party during the 19th and 20th centuries.

ApR is also coming unstuck. Disagreements within the leadership have led Mugur Vintila, Adrain Balanescu and Catalin Croitoru to found the National Initiative for Romania party in an attempt to reunite current dissatisfied ApR members. Their departure has been accompanied by criticisms over a possible ApR-PDSR alliance, which Melescanu has refuted.

In the meantime, the opposition continues to consolidate its lead in the polls. The Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSDR) announced its intention to form an electoral alliance with PDSR and eventually to merge after the elections. The number of seats accorded to PSDR members will be based on the results of the 2000 local election.

Events over the past three months are symptomatic of larger systemic problems. In particular, the monopolization of power by an older generation of leaders, accustomed to zero-sum political tactics, fosters confrontational politics and has led to the downfall of two governments since the 1996 national elections. NDI's Political Party Exchange (PPE) Program addresses this deficit by training promising young political leaders in election-related and party organizing skills to prepare them for higher political aspirations.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The Political Party Exchange Program's activities center around four work-study missions to the United States over a two-year period. Each mission has a specific theme and imparts core political skills to participants. The first mission, in November 1999, focused on campaign management. The second mission, in March 2000, centered on voter contact and field work. Multiparty groups of delegates take part in interactive training workshops, site visits and observation activities that focus on election-related and party organizing skills. Delegates also participate in in-country training activities to reinforce what they learned during study missions and implement individual projects to improve their parties' election efforts in the 2000 local and national elections.

Follow-up Questionnaires

After the June local elections, graduates from the PPE-1 and PPE-2 work-study missions to the United States were sent a brief questionnaire to check on the progress of their project proposal. Judging from the initial returns, most of the graduates are on track with their projects. Several had to modify their initial proposals because of lack of resources, lack of volunteers and/or resistance from within the party. All, however, have made a significant effort toward implementation and remain enthusiastic about the PPE program.

PPE Graduates and Cross-Training Opportunities

With USAID funding through the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), NDI implemented a series of intensive, summer election workshops for party youth in the three regions of Transylvania (west), Moldavia (northeast) and Wallachia (south). Over a four-week period, the Romania team organized three, three-day training sessions that covered election planning and strategy development, message development and delivery, media relations and communication, voter contact and fieldwork, and fundraising.

Sixteen of the 23 graduates from the first and second PPE study missions participated as trainers in the workshops. Graduates covered a broad variety of themes, including voter contact and field work (e.g., door-to-door canvassing and "Get Out the Vote" operations), campaign planning (e.g., human and financial resource budgeting, and developing an election strategy and an activities timeline), media relations and message development (e.g., message box, using polls to target voters, and techniques for obtaining earned media coverage), and advance work or planning for political events. The breakdown of trainers according to party affiliation and study mission was as follows:

	<u>PPE-1</u>	<u>PPE-2</u>
National Liberal Party (PNL)		1
National Peasants Party-Christian Democrats (PNTCD)	1	3
Social Democracy Party of Romania (PDSR)	1	1
Democratic Party (PD)	2	3
Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)	2	1
National Christian Democratic Alliance (ANCD)		1
Total	6	10

In addition to providing assistance in training, the PPE graduates were a valuable resource in helping to identify qualified candidates to take part in the CEPPS-funded training and to organize the workshops in the municipalities of Predeal, Turgu Mures and Iasi. PPE graduates' participation in the summer election workshops proved beneficial to both groups, in that the CEPPS program participants benefited from the first-hand experience of seasoned party activists, while PPE graduates garnered valuable leadership skills, training experience and recognition from party leaders.

One of the graduates from the second PPE class participated in a youth seminar organized by NDI in Guinea (West Africa) in September. The seminar was organized to promote dialogue among party youth organizations and to increase youth participation in the political process. The event represented the first instance in which Guinean youth wings met in a multiparty setting.

The NDI Guinea team reported that the PPE participant was able to use her teaching background to create a participative approach to her presentation, which was appreciated by the attendees.

Confirmation of PPE-3 Participants

NDI conducted interviews in May and June for the third group of PPE participants. The next study mission will focus on media relations and external communication and will take place in January 2001 around the U.S. presidential inauguration.

Twelve participants were selected out of a pool of 87 candidates. The gender composition of the group was evenly divided, with six men and six women. Nine of the participants are from areas outside of Bucharest. The distribution by party affiliation was as follows: 3 PDSR, 1 PD; 2 PNTCD; 1 PSDR; 2 PNL; 1 ANCD; 1 UDMR; and 1 ApR.

All of the participants of the third mission are well-seasoned activists, with an average of five years of party membership and at least one election experience, with most having two or more. NDI has, in general, required participants to demonstrate a minimum level of experience and commitment to their respective parties; however, greater emphasis was placed on selecting more mature and experienced participants for the third group given the study mission's focus on media and communication, which is often perceived as a higher profile position within parties.

IV. RESULTS

The participation of PPE graduates in the summer youth workshops represents three results achieved in this quarter. First, graduates demonstrated an ability to apply concepts learned during study missions and to transfer those ideas to other party activists. Second, by participating in these and similar activities, PPE participants can increase their visibility, which can assist in their promotion through their respective party ranks. Third, PPE graduate participation in the summer workshops contributes to wider efforts by NDI of creating a network of new and rising leaders, which can contribute to greater cooperation and consensus building among Romania's future leaders.

V. EVALUATION

That PPE graduates were employed in related training activities demonstrates that NDI is meeting its objectives to develop leadership, communication and organizational skills in program participants and that these skills are being transferred to other party youth colleagues.

The composition of the third group of PPE participants also indicates that NDI has been able to stay on target with regard to its selective factors of gender balance and regional and party diversity.

In addition to the program's stated objectives, NDI's efforts have also been instrumental in creating an inter-party network of young leaders. In the long run, the establishment of personal links among potential future leaders can lay a foundation for greater consensus building and compromise in Romania politics. Greater cooperation among ruling parties and between governing and opposition forces will contribute greatly to consolidating Romania's transition to a full-fledged democracy and tackling the country's socioeconomic problems.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

In light of elections taking place on November 26 and a self-imposed 30-day rule that bars NDI from organizing official training activities 30 days out from an election, the Institute will not conduct any formal training activities in the subsequent quarter. However, NDI will conduct informal consultations with parties and individuals that have participated in the Political Party Exchange Program. The focus of the consultations will be on media and communication strategies.

In the forthcoming quarter, NDI will also begin logistical preparations and development of its training modules for the next study mission, which is tentatively scheduled for January 13 through 27.