

ROMANIA YES TO BENEFITS, NO TO EU OBLIGATIONS



A billboard with the court's assigned place name 'Cluj-Napoca Kolozsvar' was quickly removed after the Romanian press reported on it. | image Gabor Landman

Romania – with its large Hungarian minority – violates the constitutionally required multilingualism. It is time for the European Union to stop accepting this. Since 1 January, the Netherlands has been president of the – multilingual – European Union. Romania, which joined in 2007, is also a multilingual state. It even hosts the largest autonomous minority in Europe: the ethnic Hungarians, who woke up in Romania in 1947 and lost their autonomy in 1968. Romania's European membership has been sold to the Dutch people as necessary for peace, stability and prosperity in Europe. Ratification of the Strasbourg Convention and the European Charter for Regional Languages was a hard admission requirement. These treaties require, among other things, bilingual place name signs. Romania's attitude towards its own people, however, does not refer to these European agreements, but to the Ceausescu dictatorship. During this period, the once diverse Transylvania lost two of its populations: the Jews and the Germans, who were sold for money to Israel and Germany.

The ethnic Hungarians were forcibly assimilated. In this spirit, Ceausescu changed the name of the capital of Transylvania from Cluj to Cluj-Napoca in 1974. In the period just before accession to the



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European Union, Mayor Gheorghe Funar in Cluj pursued a xenophobic and nationalist course. He became internationally known when he had all public objects in the city painted in the colors of the Romanian flag and also categorically expelled the Hungarian language from public life. Visitors to the city were welcomed with signs stating that Romanian is the official language. In the summer of 2014, the European Language Rights Foundation made the Romanian news when it had won a lawsuit to oblige the municipality of Cluj to place a bilingual place name sign with 'Cluj-Napoca Kolozsvár' on it.

The verdict demonstrated transparency, justice and respect for European legislation. The judgment detailed the seven legal arguments on the basis of which this sign was mandatory. Funar's successor as mayor of Cluj, Emil Boc, appealed, after which the Court of Cluj ruled in February 2015 that a Dutch foundation does not have the power to bring proceedings, without having refuted any argument of the earlier judgment. Strengthened by this, residents of Cluj have started a new process under the name Muszaj-Musaj for the placement of these signs. Again Mayor Boc objected. Since October 2015, the court has postponed the judgment by one month each time; on February 1, this happened for the fifth time. This situation is strange because Romania wants to become a member of the Schengen area. Bucharest aims to become European Capital of Culture in 2021. But in the meantime, the country refuses a symbol of European identity and does not act on the letter and spirit of treaties that were a condition for EU membership.

The attitude of the Mayor of Cluj illustrates the one-sided nature of Romania's EU membership. The country wants to benefit from EU fundamental rights, such as free movement of people, while not respecting the fundamental rights of its own people. The Romanian government protests in a high tone against alleged nationalism against Romanians in Europe, but refuses to condemn nationalism against Europeans in Romania. While millions of Romanians live and work in Western Europe, Romania categorically refuses asylum seekers. Moreover, Romania is stoking geopolitical turmoil, by openly speaking of annexation of Moldova including the renegade Russian-speaking Republic of Transnistria. So far, the EU has not been able to do core European values in Romania, such as human rights and an independent judiciary, in As president of the European Union, the Netherlands should make clear that this is not the way the EU works.

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