



**Narrative Report concerning the Third Seminar of the
Ovidiu Șincai European School
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The third national seminar of the “Ovidiu Șincai” European School – 2010 edition took place at the Mila 35 Complex from the Danube Delta in the period 17-20 June 2010. Its main theme was *Politics and Society in a European Democracy*. Lectures were presented by:

- **Alexandru Athanasiu**, former Minister of Labour and Social Protection (1996-1999) and of Education, Research and Youth (2003-2004) – **“A Project for Romania”**;
- **Alexandru Radu**, Professor, Faculty of Political Science, “Dimitrie Cantemir” Christian University, Bucharest – **“Parliamentarianism, semi-presidentialism or presidentialism?”**;
- **Daniel Barbu**, Professor, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest – **“Limits of Democracy”**;
- **Anne Jugănar**, Director of the Ovidiu Șincai European School – **“The Crisis of Leadership in European Democracies. Searching for new models”**;
- **Teodor Meleșcanu**, Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs (1992-1996) and of Defence (2007-2008) – **“A Project for Romania”**.

Below are the main ideas which emerged during the presentations and the debates:

1. Alexandru Athanasiu – “A Project for Romania”

Any future development project concerning Romanian should take into account the European model. It is based on two fundamental institutions: the European Union (27 Member States) and the Council of Europe (47 Member States).

At the level of the European Union, the European model is based on three pillars: economic growth, reduced unemployment and general social protection (starting with the Maastricht Treaty, in 1992). The European Union is considered to be a “space of freedom, prosperity and social protection” in which economy is regarded as a means of improvement and solid premise of freedom, contrary to the American model, which considers that first there must be economic growth and only afterwards social progress.

From a European point of view, there cannot be economic growth without people, without improving living standards. The state institutions ensure, in this

context, a redistribution of wealth. In the United States a major emphasis is on employability, without securing the job, instead encouraging mobility. Until the crisis, in the United States there was a lower rate of unemployment than in Europe, but also a higher rate of poverty. In the European Union there was a higher rate of unemployment and a lower rate of poverty due to social security.

Globalization led to an increase of people longevity and the increase of the individuals' ageing phenomenon in the economic growth and high technology areas (Europe and North America), which leads to an imbalance in the pensions system: the rate of social revenues replacement is decreasing. The current pensions system, created in the times of German chancellor Bismarck, implied pension provision for an average period of 1-5 years. Today, at the EU level, the average life expectancy of men is 82 years and in the case of women it is 85 years. Thus, considering women, we have an average retirement period of 25 years, by which the instalment period duration is closing in to the subscription period duration, the number of contributors closing in to the number of beneficiaries.

The possible solutions could be the progressive degradation of benefits, changing the financing system (for example, in countries of Central and Eastern Europe private administration pension funds were introduced, using complementary capitalization, and in the Scandinavian countries a mixed system was introduced, based on interest capitalization in banks). In Romania there are attempts to enlarge the taxing basis, but this is not a viable solution.

Another important phenomenon is delocalization, by which enterprises are moving their headquarters to areas with cheaper labour force. The effects of these measures are the occurrence of unfair competition, increasing unemployment within the EU, pricing differences. The European Parliament tried to curb these effects by offering compensations to areas from which the enterprises are leaving.

At the level of family stability there are also a series of problems. The number of divorces during the last 10 years is higher than the number of marriages. From a sociological point of view, one must understand that the young generation is different from the previous generations, from the 70s and 80s, by the fact that the image of the young mother and the extended family are strongly challenged. Today, the average marriage age is higher (30-32 years), which raises the issue of a woman's fertility and a decreasing population growth rate. Birth is increasingly being opposed to career and women's individual emancipation, by means of gender policies. Young people stay for a longer period within their families, they are cautious in establishing a new family. To this, one might add the stress caused by uncertain jobs, economic instability, diseases of all kinds, alienation of the individual from the others and the atrophy of the need for dialogue (virtualization, as a result of technological advances in the field of communications).

In this context, economic competitiveness is very important, but it is not equitable at global level. In China, the average working week covers 52 hours, while in France only 35 hours. Also, strike rights are obviously regulated in a different manner for the two cases.

The European social model, about which it is said that it is adrift, includes three alternatives. In the Nordic part of the continent, it is characterized by a high level of taxation and a significant number of jobs in the public sector (of a good quality and

equal in number with jobs in the private sector). In the German area we have a corporatist model, based on taxation of revenues and special contributions for the social insurances funds. There is also an Anglo-Saxon model, based on a reduced level of taxation and focused social policies towards target groups, with the exception of the health system, supported by general taxation, and which is cheaper but harder to access.

Until the crisis, at European level a few utopias were very popular. One of them was that of the low budget deficit, based on the Stability Pact providing for a maximum deficit of 3% in the Eurozone (by the Maastricht Treaty). This was meant to ensure a reduction of internal economic disparities, both at national and at European level, full employability (strengthened by the Amsterdam Treaty) and the presence of the state as employer on the free market (thus rejecting the minimal state). The main inconvenience of this model was the fact that only a deficit can create public investments, not only in infrastructure, but also in people. Education is the means by which personal conditions can improve, through the three T (talent, technology, tolerance).

Another utopia was that of social justice, which aimed to restructure the



European labour force, by decreasing the share of the main economic sectors (agriculture to 8-10% and industry under 23%) and increasing the share of research and services. The main slogan of this

tendency was “more and better jobs” (access, remuneration, result). The best remuneration existed in the IT field, in the field of free lancers and of public servants. The modernization of the social state implied decent salaries for all, re-qualification and reintegration of the unemployed, fighting social exclusion and a combination of economic growth with social policies. Poverty was to be fought through the minimum wage, equal to a half of the average gross wage. The share of women within the labour force was to increase to a large extent (in Denmark they already account for an average of 42% of family revenues, in Spain and Italy only for 27%).

The priorities of social justice were fighting poverty, basic education quality and lifelong learning. Currently, the rate of changing jobs is of 2 years and the rate of changing occupations is of 8-10 years. Re-qualification implies a society based on knowledge, not on reflection, as jobs cannot be secured due to the rapid re-integration by accessing the economic circuit. Simultaneously, the revenues and wealth imbalances must be limited and the role of the woman on the labour market must be re-considered due to the “double working day” (for raising children), by sharing more rights and obligations with the partner. However, gender balance must be subsumed to the general redistribution of social resources.

Another utopia was that of good governance and social policies, which were to ensure social security. Policies to fight social exclusion (of underprivileged strata, women, religious communities, elder) is based on preserving the social model principles, such as fighting poverty, labour force mobility, risk sharing among labour partners (by subsidising new jobs and banking taxation), intense technological exchanges, flexi-security (limited period contracts, with lesser guarantees).

In this entire context, Romania’s vulnerabilities are related to the existence of economic monopolies, characterized by a lack of competitiveness, by discriminatory access to resource, by the arbitrary establishment of prices and not least by corruption. The Romanian state encourages economic monopolies by means of state contracts with private companies. One must, though, be conscious that privatization is not always the solution for increasing economic efficiency. The state must preserve those products which ensure its sovereign independence. Public purchasing and fiscal policies can restart the engine of the economy.

Another problem in Romania is related to the thick organization system, having no institutional content, not even the one adopted following the European model. The faulty selection and the low remuneration, as well as the practice of taking credits without a sound evaluation system, lead to hijacking youth behaviour, which are attracted by emigration, delinquency and fraud. General mistrust in institutions, in the education system, in formal hierarchies, contributes to labour force migration towards little or non-taxed informal systems.

European norms adopted by Romania were not yet internalized and mentally accepted by the population. It must be mentioned there is a tradition in our country’s history to have achievements only as a result of favourable situations or due to opportunism and less by developing the social body on the whole. Romania’s modernization is a process that did not involve until now but the elites. The mentality of most people is that of assisted individuals, a residual inheritance of the communist past. Romanian transition is, on the whole, a failure, many measures being taken due to electoral interests and not due to structural needs.

The solutions to the present situation could be to introduce pro-active social assistance policies and the re-introduction of the global income tax (which accomplishes a radiography of the social situation). It is, however, the task of a new generation of Romanian politicians to push the country into another perspective direction, to find an exit from the labyrinth of the present.

2. Alexandru Radu – “Parliamentarianism, semi-presidentialism or presidentialism?”

From the beginning it must be said that these three terms are incorrectly used in the Romanian public debate space. The parliamentary system is based on the supremacy of the legislative branch, according to the British model. The presidential system is based on the active role of the president within the executive branch, following the American model. The semi-presidential system is a mixture of the two previous systems, in order to reach an institutional balance, partially based on the French model. Each of the three systems can ensure good governance, all depending on the society in which they are applied.

Nevertheless, every democratic system is based on the supremacy of parliament. Both in Romania and the United States, the president can be submitted to the impeachment procedure. Within presidential systems, however, the president is

by popular vote, cannot be directly revoked by the parliament and leads the government.

Within semi-presidential systems, there is a so-called dual executive, the president and the prime minister sharing the executive competences.



A secondary criterion within presidential systems is the incompatibility among members of the executive and those of the legislative. In Romania there is a problem in this field, as we have a double immunity of politicians, conferred by simultaneous holding the two types of public offices: MPs can be members of government.

Within parliamentary systems there may be a weak dependence of the executive on the legislative, such as in the United Kingdom. This is a result of the simple plurality type of voting, which translates into a stable one-party majority and the leader of the winning party automatically becomes the head of government. Another example of a parliamentary system is where there are strong disciplined parties, well structured and in which political migration is excluded. It is generally the case of systems based on proportional closed party lists voting.

It is often said about the Romanian political system that it is semi-presidential, on the basis of the formal constitutional description and the separation of state powers. Thus, the Romanian president can chair government sessions concerning national interest issues, but only if invited by the prime minister. Also, the president cannot

dissolve the parliament unless a confidence vote is refused twice to the candidates for prime minister he appoints.

In Western Europe there are five systems which are considered semi-presidential: Austria, Finland, France, Iceland and Ireland. However, none of those presidents is leading the executive. Also, if we take a closer look to European political systems we can notice that the prerogative of dissolving the parliament is not a pattern of presidentialism but, on the contrary, is mainly present within parliamentary systems. Thus, Romania is not a semi-presidential system, but a parliamentary one having highly personalized presidential shade.

In Romania a recurrent theme is the modification of the Constitution; but the main problem lays not in the constitutional texts, but in their observance. For example, although the Constitution provides the mandates of parliamentarians are representative, in reality, after the modification operated in the electoral system in 2008, we have four types of MPs: (a) senators; (b) deputies; (c) default representatives of national minorities; (d) additional MPs elected on the basis of proportional representation, simultaneously with MPs elected by majority vote in constituencies. Thus, the modification of the constitution is in fact a false theme; in practice, the objective is a constitutional revision of the 1991 fundamental document, according to the procedure followed in 2003.

3. Daniel Barbu – “Limits of Democracy”

Within democratic systems, there are three main action axes: (a) public and individual liberties; (b) economic prosperity; (c) social justice. The curse of democracy is, though, not being able to enjoy simultaneously but two of these components. Politicians act for the accomplishment of the three objectives by means of consciousness (free will).

In Romania, the general theory is based on the existence of a democratic deficit and on the inherited authoritarian tendencies (as early as the 30s). The real problem, lately, is the lack of economic result which would support the democratic regime. For this reason, the issue of democracy becomes secondary for the population.

Capitalism is the brother of democracy and is born in relation with the latter. There is a hypothesis that democracy would be just a side-effect of capitalism. Political equality, manifested through the universal male suffrage, becomes in fact a fundamental principle of European societies only after the First World War and only in order to preserve economic inequality. The relation between democracy and capitalism is unidirectional: there cannot be democracy without capitalism but capitalism can also exist without democracy. Nevertheless, democracy and capitalism are competitors, as political democracy is not sufficient to have economic democracy. Modern democracy still preserves two features of ancient democracy: (a) isonomy, equality of all, and (b) isegory, the right to express opinions.

Capitalism implies market supremacy (“the invisible hand”) which regulates society in the meaning of the minimal state. The last 20 years showed we cannot organize capitalism; distances do not allow for the development of a rigorous organization. However, democracy needs close relations between citizens. The promise represents the main way in which the relation between politicians and

population is established. Not keeping it leads to alienation of citizens from the political system.

In Central and Eastern Europe, after 1989, building democracy was not a solidary process because there were no models to this end. There were, though, three simultaneous processes: (a) building democracy; (b) shift to market economy; (c) elaboration of the state laws. By comparison, in Southern Europe (Greece, Portugal, Spain) a market economy already existed in the 70s. This difference led to restraining possibilities of former communist Central and East European countries to imitate any democratization model. The lack of concrete plans led to improvisation, but democracy and market economy cannot be established and built immediately. Market is a construction of the civil society and not of the government; it cannot be built but in system of rule of law, which is not entirely synonym with existing state laws.

In analysing Romanian capitalism we do not have the same guidelines as in the case of democracy. The initial myth (privatization which ensures better management) was contradicted in reality by replicating behaviours from the public sector in the private sector. Even at present the Romanian public sector produces 30% of the GDP (or even more if we take into account public interest institutions, such as universities). Public sector productivity rates are similar to private sector rates. Within Romanian economy, state debts are smaller than private debts assumed by the state.

The main problem of Romanian society lays in the weakness of the national



economy, ranked among the last in Europe. This is due to the fact that we do not have an authentic, real capitalism; there only few great companies which are subsidised by the state and some

“avuncular” banks that do not invest in the real economy. The crisis unveils the honourable appearance of a society and represents an opportunity for consciousness and responsibility. At this point, capitalism appears as a caricature and, at world level, it was even envisaged to reconfigure and strongly regulate it. Currently, there is no discussion about that and the banks preserve their influence on politicians.

According to the theory of post-democracy, present democratic political regimes function differently compared to the textbook definition, according to two

dimensions: (a) media, from parties and debate clubs to televised discussions and messages; (b) decision, which is taken in ever smaller (informal) circles of cronies from the public administration and the business environment.

The analysis of Romania's situation places us outside the consolidated capitalist system, based on the existence of a *homo economicus*, characterising North America, Western Europe and East Asia. What we have is a developing agrarian society. Romanian governance does not cover the entire population, at least if we are referring to the taxation system which includes only 66% of the inhabitants. The elements which the government can use to influence the evolution of the society are the monetary and the fiscal policies. By adopting the flat tax the government's fiscal policy was abolished and the monetary policy only depends on the national bank governor.

The Romanian democratic state inherited the structures and the employees of the former communist regime. The state organization is therefore efficient and structured but has no public utility for a democratic system. The attitude towards procedures is what makes us different from consolidated democratic systems. Any mediation between authentic democracy and capitalism is achieved by law and by the existence of a rule of law; unfortunately the latter is greatly affected by frequent changes in the Romanian justice system under the negative influence of politicians.

4. Anne Jugănaru – “The Crisis of Leadership in European Democracies. Searching for new models”

During the last two decades it was often discussed about a general crisis of leadership in European politics. After 1989 and the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, democracy seems to have become an abstract notion supported by a few technocrats and experts without charisma or popular exposure. Meanwhile, the extremist forces began to bring forth several strong personalities, often controversial but ultimately perceived as authoritative. This explains why, during the last years, traditional democratic parties within the EU had modest and sometimes extremely bad results in the local, national or European elections.

In theory, politicians should be models for the entire society. But especially the political leaders are the ones who should be capable to cause such a dynamic effort within the society that their personal behaviour and performance has an impact over ordinary people. This type of influence is similar with the impact actors from Hollywood movies have over large numbers of viewers, who become their fans. At a different scale, the political leader needs to represent a model that could be embraced by the society, both for his success and for leaving his mark over the country he leads. This can only be done through a coherent rational project accompanied by an entire strategy of communication and personal exceptional qualities: empathy and charisma.

One can argue that traditional democratic parties, at least lately, did not perform well in terms of charismatic personalities. Instead, it was much easier for extremist to promote distinct, non-conformist personalities, who distinguished themselves by an anti-system behaviour and thus gained notoriety. If, at the rhetoric level, a populist communication was also used, then the success in promoting leaders was extremely high.

The political system of the various Member States of the European Union could also have had an impact over this development. Thus, we can notice that in the case of

France, the existence of a dual executive system, favouring a strong president, led to the predominance of charismatic characters which accomplished this function, such as Charles de Gaulle and his heirs, Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy. In other countries, such as Italy or the United Kingdom, where parliamentary systems are in place, charismatic leaders were the exception rather than the rule.

One of the possible answers of European democracies in their search for future leadership models could be its emphasis upon woman politicians. During the second



half of the last century women increasingly began to choose politics to express their views.

Marginalized at first by most of the men politicians, who had a traditionalist opinion about the political field, women

began to be accepted and gradually pushed for gender balance within political parties. This trend was especially successful in Nordic countries, where it even became a fact of life, but also in other Western countries. In Central and Eastern Europe, the communist regimes used to support the emancipation of women. However, this was made more in quantitative than in qualitative terms, as women were often used as manoeuvre leverage by some man politicians against others.

At European level, women have undisputedly gained a higher role in politics, but their role as individual leaders is not yet valued as it should. Women are too much prone to act collectively at this level and less to become leaders. Surprisingly or not, European and world woman leaders used to come more from the right. It is the widely cited example of Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister between 1979 and 1990 and, more recently, Angela Merkel, the acting German Chancellor since 2005.

These examples emphasize the need for considering a new model of woman leadership for European democracy. As women are increasingly becoming a political majority, it would be useful to also think about them as leaders and not only as first ladies. But, in order to be successful in this enterprise, one should overcome certain psychological, cultural and behavioural barriers. This requires time and painstaking.

5. Teodor Meleşcanu – “A Project for Romania”

During the evolution of human societies there were two main leadership systems. The first one, of divine origin, merged in the Ancient Egypt approximately around 3000 BC, the leader of the society being considered the son of the god, divine in nature, having an administrative system of scribes and servants which put into practice his decisions, being the only ones accountable for their success. Even today, there are systems of this type, monarchies legitimated by the sovereign's birth, in Japan and Morocco. The main feature of this system is the fact that the relation with the subjects is unidirectional, from the sovereign to the people.

Another type emerged in Mesopotamia around 2500 BC and was based on laws that are governing. The public system is based on the authority of judges who ensure the application and observance of laws. The main example of this kind is the Code of Hammurabi, a predecessor of the Napoleonic Codes, which ensures private property allowing thus for building a sedentary population. The political system thus created implied the existence of a kind of bicameral parliament, made up of a lower chamber (those bearing arms) and an upper chamber (of the wise). There were also variations of these two models, such as China, where there was a divine sovereign but only while there was good governance. In the case of Jews, the system was based on their monotheistic faith and the legitimacy of being the “chosen people”.

Romania never had a divine sovereign. When we had a king, in the person of Carol I, he was not a native of the land, but was instead “imported” from the ranks of West European dynasties. Thus, what we had was a leadership type closed to the legalist Mesopotamian alternative; it was the period when the main codes of law were adopted, concerning the constitutional organization, army structure, postal system, railway system, the civil code inspired from the French one etc. Romanian statehood thus emerged very late, at the end of the 19th century, having as side-effect the citizen's mistrust in public institutions, seen as belonging to others. The public clerk was considered to be outside of the common people, above it, contrary to the Anglo-Saxon meaning of the word („civil servant”), implying the fulfilment of a public service. Therefore, the common people's main objective was to cheat on the state.

The Romanian state thus developed mainly on geographical and resources bases (including human resources). There were also moments when we were capable of evolving quite fast, in spite of exiting conditions: Union of Principalities in 1859, Independence Proclamation in 1877, Greater Romania in 1918, the Revolution of 1989 and EU Accession in 2007. After the First World War we had a quick evolution, due to the creation of industry, of a banking system and of agricultural development (the year of reference being 1938). The population's traditional mentality, though, pushed the country back to a stagnation period. In the period of communist industrialization a fast economic evolution took place (1960-1975), but it was not continued ever since.

At this point, Romania needs a new national project in order to bridge the gap separating it from the west of Europe. Such a project would ensure cohesion of the society as a whole. Currently, society is atomized, there is no particular bond among people; there is a “war of all against all”, with a negative impact in all fields. The external objectives played a very important role in Romania's evolution; they were a catalyst for internal evolutions (for example, NATO and EU accession).

First of all, some conceptual principles must be established, but without ignoring the premises: (1) a short evaluation of our situation, characterized by dissolution of the state authority and institutions (82% of Romanians believe we are heading for the wrong direction), a fact which can affect the very national identity in the context of free movement; (2) rebuilding hope in their future.

A first principle would be the choice of realism instead of populism and demagoguery. For this we need a substantial, professional discourse and renouncing a leadership following polls.

Secondly, we need ideology and not mercantile pragmatism, the recurring themes being revolution, change, European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

We need another doctrine, of competence,

professionalism and meritocracy. Appointments for public offices following political criteria undermine such an approach and we must understand once for all that any political career is different and separate from a professional career.

Thirdly, we need experience and expertise. The Romanian government allocates important resources for foreign consultancy, as it lacks its own human resources, who are retiring, emigrate abroad or towards the private enterprises. Meritocracy, which should be overarching within public institutions, is replaced by cronies, demagoguery and discourses lacking vision, or by a sterile contemplation of reality. Selling conscience and votes is the most dangerous road towards the fall of democracy and human rights breaches.

Fourthly, economic development must become the main objective of the society, a long term sustainable development. We must avoid social unrest and set the bases of prosperity by supporting labour and capital, also by attracting foreign investments. People must be involved in this project, by regaining trust and becoming the new politicians of tomorrow.

For the achievement of this project there are a series of necessary actions of Romanian authorities. Thus, one must accomplish our definition as a strategic importance actor at the European and Euro-Atlantic border, having diplomatic relations and interests in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Middle East. As a matter of fact, to this end, we already have strategic partnerships with the



United States, France, Poland, Turkey and Azerbaijan. The presence of our troops on the scenes of operations from Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan was an asset for us, and the lack of financial resources should not be a barrier. Another asset is our diplomatic and international law experience, especially in relations with countries of the Middle East (Israel and Arab countries).

Another direction is the development of Romania's national economy. The state should not overtax labour and capital, but consumption, property and other goods. Unfortunately for us, natural resources are not relevant for this kind of economic development. Romanian capitalism is very weak, therefore we need foreign investments. The benefits after EU accession were irrelevant, that is why public policies must create new fiscal facilities for investments, which can come from anywhere (also from the United States, China or Russia), taking into account that European investment can no longer be considered "foreign". Investments must be especially directed towards productive fields, bringing a technology transfer and higher skills for the labour force. A positive example comes from the field of communications, where Romania already bridged the gap by burning some phases.

6. Evaluation of questionnaires

Questions regarded the evaluation of each speaker, according to informational content, novelty, interactivity and efficiency (on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest level), appreciations regard the organisation of the third seminar, compared to the first two, interaction with other participants and speakers and recommendations for future editions.

Accordingly, the organization of the second seminar was considered superior and above average (most of the participants choosing the answer "Very Good" and "Good"). As far as the communication with other participants and the speakers, it was considered satisfactory at both levels.

Participants have recommended the following: identifying more concrete solutions for Romania during debates, more interactivity (working groups, time limit for each question) and inviting school alumni to seminars.