



Political Report

**The Democratic Party from Romania became an Associate Member
of the European People's Party**

by

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On November 9, the European People's Party (EPP) upgraded the Democratic Party (PD) from Romania status, from Observer Member to Associate Member. The strengthened relationship between EPP and PD represents an important political action both at the level of European representation of the Romanian political parties and at the level of the internal political scene from Romania.

The decision taken during the meeting held in Brussels was supported by 68 of the 69 EPP member parties and only one refrain from voting was registered, that of the Romanian member party The National Peasant Christian-Democratic Party (PNTCD).

From the official explanations of the party leaders emerges that PNTCD decision to refrain from voting does not mean a negative vote against PD, but a way to express the concern regarding the future political actions of PD and the need for EPP to continue monitoring PD's actions.

The relationship between EPP and PD has started in June 2005 when the PD has forwarded the application and was consolidated in September 2005 when the Romanian party was accepted as an Observer Member of EPP.

According to the Statutes of the EPP, part II, article 5, PD will automatically become a full member party of the EPP, with full rights and obligations, starting from January 2007 when Romania will officially become a European Union member country.

Currently, Romania has three member parties in EPP as two other smaller parties are already Associate Member of EPP: The National Peasant Christian-Democratic Party (PNTCD) and the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians from Romania (UDMR).

PD's option for the popular political trend has been a slow but constant process of moving from centre-left to centre-right spectrum of the Romanian political life.

PD was founded in 1992 by Petre Roman, being in fact the reformist wing of the National Salvation Front (FSN) – a centre-left party founded back in 1990.

Ever since 1992, PD has created its political identity by placing itself in opposition with the authentic representative of the social-democracy in Romania, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and its leader Ion Iliescu, who represent the conservative wing of the same old FSN.

Being in opposition when the social-democrats were governing (1992 – 1996 and 2000 - 2004) and governing together with centre-right political forces (1996 - 2000) PD has done the decisive step towards the centre-right area in 2003. That is the moment when PD has founded together with the National Liberal Party (PNL) the D.A. Alliance (in translation the Truth and Justice Alliance) in an attempt to create an electoral and governing alternative to the strong PSD, through a centre-right political pole.

D.A. Alliance ran in the elections with a centre-right governing programme, which was focused on: strengthening the authority and credibility of the state institutions, decentralization of the public administration, reshaping and reducing the role of the state, mainly in the economical field, improving the quality of the educational system, introducing an incentive fiscal system by reducing the financial taxes, guaranteeing the private property, social cohesion, observing the minority rights and of course supporting the European integration of the country.

As a result of the cooperation between PD and PNL, the former president of PD – Traian Basescu is currently the President of Romania and PD is one of the two major parties from the governing coalition.

The ideological clarification of PD took place in 2005 when PD was not accepted as a full member in the European Socialist Party (ESP) as a consequence of its recedes from ESP and its announced intention to become closer with EPP. Soon after this, PD gave up its affiliation to the Socialist International. On June 6, 2005 PD members adopted the new popular doctrine of the party, transforming PD in the major central right party from Romania.

In the core of the new popular doctrine of PD stands the concept of “strong democracy” which has four pillars: freedom, responsibility, solidarity and justice. The concept of a “strong democracy” – the main political objective of PD for the Romanian society – also contains the principle of subsidiarity applied by coherent institutions, an efficient and

solidary market economy, an extensive and active social protection, as well as an independent judiciary.

By embracing the new popular doctrine, PD has reconciled its political action with the political ideology. The ideological clarification represents a natural process taking into account that by its political actions and discourse PD has always placed itself in the centre of the political spectrum, like: supporting the decentralization, the unique financial tax at 16%, the right to private property, the administration reforming process, the limited role of the state in the economy, subsidiarity.

At this time, PD is one of the strongest political parties from Romania, having an important role in the political life of the country. PD internal influence can be better described by some important political indicators:

- In the current coalition government headed by Calin Popescu Tariceanu (president of PNL) PD has seven ministries: Sulfina Barbu – Minister of Environment and Waters Management, Gheorghe Barbu – Minister of Labour, Radu Berceanu – Minister of Transportation, Constructions and Tourism, Vasile Blaga – Minister of Administration and Internal Affairs, Anca Daniela Boagiu – Minister of European Integration, Sorin Frunzaverde – Minister of National Defence and Mihail Hardau – Minister of Education. PD has also sixteen State Secretaries.
- In the Romanian Parliament, PD represents the third political force with 52 members in the Chamber of Deputies and 21 in the Senate.
- PD has in the European Parliament five euro-observers: Roberta Alma Anastase, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Monica Iacob Ridzi, Maria Petre and Radu Tarle.
- In the local administration PD has mayors in 44 big cities of the country and totalizes 702 mayors all over the country. Adriean Videanu, the executive president of PD is also the Mayor of Bucharest.
- According to the opinion polls, during the last two years the voting intention for PD is witnessing an upward trend. If during the year 2003 PD had around 11% of the voting intention, in October 2006 PD has pulled 54% out of the 46, 7% of the D.A. Alliance predicted votes. The relation of forces within the D.A. Alliance has changed and PNL has lost the position of the strongest party from the D.A. Alliance in favour of PD.
- The most relevant parameter for PD representation at the European level will be the results of the elections for the European Parliament. The foresight for the European elections from May 2007 ranges PD as the favourite option of the Romanian electorate. In an opinion poll from October 2006 PD has ranked first with 29% of the voting intention, being followed by the National Liberal Party with 21.7% and the Social Democratic Party with 21.5%.

Consequences of the upgraded status of PD in EPP

EPP decision to accept PD as an Associate Member leads to an equitable representation within the European political families, of the 35 Romanian future members in the European Parliament. At this point, all three main European political groups have a viable representative on the Romanian political scene.

At the level of the domestic politics, there are also important consequences related to the EPP decision.

As PD has now received the international legitimacy as a centre-right party, an important clarification was brought in the centre-right sector of the Romanian political scene, where the electorate was confused by the too many and small parties self-claimed as Christian-democratic.

Regarding the relationship between PD and PNL, PD doubtless option for the centre-right spectrum increases the competition between PD and PNL over the traditionally right electorate. It also diminishes the chances for a fusion between PD and PNL, as PNL is very attached with its ideological identity, while PD has just expressed its preference for another ideology than the liberal one.

Regarding the political intention of building a centre-right political pole in Romania, if there is a coagulation of the political forces from the centre-right spectrum of the political scene it will have PD as the pivot political party.