



Protests against the Lex CEU in Budapest in spring 2017: the slogan reads "new regime change, European democracy!"

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'Lex CEU': Romanian Echoes and Trends

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'Lex CEU': Romanian Echoes and Trends

The events that surrounded the status of the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest at the beginning of April 2017 sparked vivid debates and public reactions in neighbouring Romania. While the academic world and a large portion of the media showed strong support for the CEU, only a few local government officials reacted similarly. With the exception of the former Romanian PM, Victor Ponta, who took the side of the Hungarian government, most officials are ignoring the issue. This text discusses these reactions from a comparative perspective, placing the case study within a wider framework of open society, liberal democratic values, academic freedom and human rights.

Even 27 years after the fall of communism, Romanian public space is occupied by debates dealing with the dichotomy of 'East vs. West', as well as with attempts to identify scapegoats for slow developments in the economic sector. Why were the measures against the CEU so promptly condemned in Romania by both the academic and professional worlds? One reason may be that "blaming it on Soros" is an old propaganda trick that dates back to the early 1990s. Back then, the name of the Hungarian-born billionaire was used by government, media and various ultra-nationalist groups as an ideal figure to impersonate alien forces in Romania, whose main purpose was to exploit everything that Romania had to offer and thus threaten the very 'soul of the nation'. During the massive anti-corruption protests that started in Romania in 2013 and reached their peak to date in early spring 2017, various media and politicians accused the protesters of being influenced, manipulated and even paid by George Soros. As citizens in a state where the values of open society are often used as weapons in the political field, especially during the electoral campaigns, witnessing the attack of the Hungarian government on the CEU provided a nightmarish glimpse into a plausible future in Romania as well. This picture is nearly complete if one adds to that the fact that in the early summer 2017 the lower chamber of the Romanian parliament voted in favour of a bill guaranteeing a referendum for redefining basic human rights, such as marriage, in terms that are reminiscent of the communist past. The initiative, which was put forward by an alliance of 44 orthodox, pro-life groups and NGOs, called The Coalition for the Family, militates in favour of what they call "the traditional family", i.e. the orthodox marriage between a man and a woman, bearing as many children as possible; they are vocally lobbying against any other religious denomination, civil partnerships, abortion, contraceptive methods, same sex marriages, mono-parental families, which are labelled "Western sins".

Open and Civil Society in Romania

Launched in Romania immediately after the fall of the communist regime in 1990, the Soros Foundation managed to quickly reach two apparently opposing targets: on one hand it became an important source of professional support for thousands of intellectuals and hundreds of non-governmental organizations, on the other hand it quickly turned into one of the most-blamed entities by the ex-communist government and certain media outlets. The reason was simple: liberal democratic values represented everything that the government could not, or pretended not to understand.

During the mid-1990s, various programmes such as scholarships, travel grants, summer schools and different forms of training were initiated by the Soros Foundation in Romania, many NGOs gained access

to publicly databases, and to the internet – all of which provided urgently needed support for the development of democratic values and basic human rights.^[1] This was a difficult task in a country in which the leaders are often publicly presented in the manner of a father-figure taking care of the family, giving out sweets or spanks, depending on the mood or on the performance of the children. The road towards a genuine liberal understanding of the notion of a "citizen" was, back then, still a long and bumpy one.

Some of the programs put forward by the Soros Foundation were mobility and academic grants for students, academics and researchers. Since 1991, thousands of young people had the opportunity to study in Western institutions and in the newly-established Central European University campuses in Prague, Warsaw and Budapest. Educated within the spirit of an open society, many of the CEU graduates (but not only them) were also supported, individually and institutionally, through the Soros-funded Academic Fellowship Program (AFP) that aimed to secure teaching and research positions within academic institutions all over Romania. Needless to say, this was not only a professional opportunity to work in the spirit of Western academic values and standards, but also a social and cultural one. It was an opportunity, for the first time in decades, where people from all over the former communist bloc, from the Baltic countries to Central and Southeastern Europe and the Transcaucasus, could meet, exchange ideas, work and also have fun together. It was not just an academic experience; it was also a deeply cultural one.

Immediate Reactions to the 'Lex CEU'

Against this backdrop, it was only logical that the Romanian academic body and civil society make a prompt and mostly critical reaction siding with the CEU. Even prior to that, witty social media users in Romania created a Facebook page of the Soros-funded alumni called the [Societatea Ultrasecretă a Soroșistilor](#) (The Ultra-secret Society of Sorosists) or creating new words and memes such as a "soroșist", i.e. a person who has benefited from such funding. The developments in Budapest also received extensive media coverage, both in the local and national press. The directions that were covered by the Romanian media are threefold: First, the situation of the CEU per se and the public reaction in Hungary; second, the academic reactions in Romania, especially the official position of the University of Bucharest; and, third, the statements of the former Romanian PM, Victor Ponta, regarding the possibility of submitting a similar bill in Romania.

First, some of the daily newspapers and news agencies in Romania, as well as public and private TV and radio stations dedicated extensive coverage to the situation surrounding 'Lex CEU'.^[2] The public station Radio Romania Cultural held a [live show](#) during the protests in Budapest,^[3] stressing the fact that the CEU is a direct target of the Orbán administration. They also addressed the significance of the CEU for the academic milieu and the political implications of the Hungarian legislation. Similar coverage was provided by Mediafax, a national news agency, and by EURACTIV, an international political analysis platform, both speaking about "the war between George Soros and Viktor Orbán"^[4] and its potential for collateral damage. The Romanian desk of Radio France International, had several broadcasts on the same topic, presenting the situation as an attack against freedom of education, freedom of thought and freedom of academic autonomy, i.e. against some of the fundamental values of a democratic society.^[5] Here the CEU was depicted as playing an outstanding role for Romania. At the same time the broadcasters were trying to find out why George Soros was turned into "public enemy number 1", not only in Romania, Hungary and Russia, but, to a lesser degree, also in Poland and the Czech Republic. One of the jokes circulating on Facebook stated that George Soros demonstrates all the negative features

needed for being the perfect scapegoat: very rich, a Hungarian of Jewish descent, and a philanthropist with liberal views. Jokes aside, the xenophobic, anti-Semitic, nationalist and populist propaganda has actually turned Soros into the symbol of a public enemy, something reminiscent of the bone-chilling slogan, popular in the 1990s, who decried the new capitalist order with the words "nu ne vindem țara" (we are not selling our country). For many years, the phrase managed to encapsulate not only a political form of nationalism, but also an economic one.

The second direction to receive media coverage was an [open letter](#) regarding the fate of the CEU written by the University of Bucharest and addressed to the Hungarian authorities. It received extensive coverage in national radio, television and news agencies (Pro TV, Digi TV, Mediafax, Hotnews, Radio Free Europe, News.ro). The letter stated that

[a]fter the fall of communism, the CEU represented a genuine point of reference for the development of democracy in the former Soviet bloc. If something did happen in the rebirth of humanities, this is to a high degree thanks to the CEU, a landmark of academic knowledge and democratic values.

The National Alliance of Students' Organizations in Romania was also quoted in the media, stating that the CEU is of paramount importance "in the context in which it shapes the fundamental concepts of education, such as [...] academic autonomy and freedom". The Maastricht School of Management in Romania (a private organization) stated [in a press release](#): "trying to silence academia is impossible and any war against it is lost from the beginning. In this absurd assault on education, we, here at MSM Romania, stand with CEU". The [Society for Romanian Studies](#) (SRS), an American-based professional association that was founded in 1973 with the aim of the academic promotion of research on Romanian culture and civilization, issued a public statement that placed the CEU situation within the framework of events occurring in illiberal states, such as Turkey and Russia, and expressed full support for the Hungarian-based university.^[6]

The petition issued by the CEU authorities was also widely disseminated through social networks and signed by hundreds of Romanian academics and CEU alumni, who also responded very quickly by adopting the #IstandwithCEU hashtag on Facebook posts and profile pictures. Last but not least, the [press conference organized by CEU](#) representatives in Budapest on 29 March 2017 was attended by the Romanian Ambassador to Hungary, HE Marius Lazurca,^[7] a move that was widely applauded in Romanian social media, especially against the backdrop of the current Romanian government's rhetoric that often accuses critics as being recipients of "Soros bribes".

Local Romanian administration was widely portrayed in national, and more specifically western Romanian news outlets as having sided with the CEU. The mayors of two Transylvanian cities, Arad and Oradea, issued public statements, widely disseminated at the local and national level, in which they offered infrastructure (classrooms and administration buildings on campus) to house the CEU if a relocation to Romania was needed, since they considered it to be "the most prestigious English language university in Central and Eastern Europe".^[8] Accused of being "Soros' man", the mayor of Arad expressed his regrets that while he was younger he did not benefit from a CEU funded program.

A third and final reason for the reactions in Romania to 'Lex CEU' lies in the belief that the Hungarian bill is part of a transnational illiberal political trend. Proof of this can be found in the intervention of the former Romanian Prime Minister, Victor Ponta, who in late March 2017 expressed the intention to submit

a similar bill in parliament.^[9] Ironically, there is no academic institution that is similar to the CEU in Romania. Both Romanian and Hungarian media covered the topic, the former mostly rejecting Ponta's intentions. The Hungarian media meanwhile were concerned that such legislation would endanger Hungarian universities in Romania.^[10] Established in 2000, Sapientia (with campuses in Târgu Mureş/Marosvásárhely, Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár, Miercurea Ciuc/Csíkszereda) receives support in the amount of 2.2 billion forints (approx. 700 000 Euro) per year from the Hungarian government. The Partium Christian University from Oradea/Nagyvárad, established in 2008, is also a recipient of public funding from both Hungary and Romania. To this day, such a bill has not been submitted – either because it was just an unsubstantiated political declaration or because such a move might antagonize the main ethnic party in Romania, the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), a big enough parliamentary player at the national and regional levels to tip the scale for or against the political power over the last two decades.

Overall, it can be stated that a high percentage of academia (from both Romania and the rest of the world), and media adopted a critical position vis-à-vis the initiative of the Hungarian government. Moreover, the public debates about 'Lex CEU' need to be seen in the context of the public protests that have been occurring in Romania recently and that reached a climax with mass demonstrations all over the country, and in the Romanian diaspora, in the winter of 2016–17. One of the central characters, cast by the Romanian authorities and the pro-government media in the bizarre role of the shrewd foreigner, the evil mind behind the forces willing to clutch Romania, was again George Soros. The following section will briefly discuss the mass protests of the winter 2016–17 as they reflect on the state of civil society and social mobilization/activism in Romania, as well as the manner in which the name of the Hungarian-born billionaire was involved in the events that consumed the country for several months.

#REZIST – The Winter of the Romanian Social Awakening

The beginning of 2017 represented, for many, the season of Romanian social awakening. Less than two months after a coalition formed by the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the Alliance of Liberal Democrats (ALDE) had won the December 2016 general elections, the newly installed government had to face the reaction of Romanian civil society. The event that triggered huge street protests all over Romania began with rumours that the governing coalition intended to pass a bill that would pardon inmates imprisoned for various corruption activities. The reasoning behind the bill (prepared by the executive branch, although the bulk of the Romanian legislation is the responsibility of the parliament) was that the overcrowding of prisons had been criticized by the EU authorities, through the GRECO and Venice Commission anti-torture reports. Apart from this being a lie (the quoted reports were recommending the prevention of crime and corruption, the social re-insertion and re-integration of the inmates and better living conditions in prisons, not a national pardon), nothing really would have justified the adoption of such measures through government-issued emergency ordinances.

Information circulating in the media and through social networks regarding the intentions of the government convinced thousands of people to protest against such measures, not only in the virtual space, but also in the streets. The second half of January 2017 was characterized by social unrest, with protesters marching weekly, on Sunday afternoons, through the main streets of Bucharest and vocally demanding the government and the Ombudsman not to push forward or vouch for such bills. This public reaction was not a new one – similar rallies had been occurring in larger Romanian cities since September 2013 in response to another governmental action, which would have granted permission to a Canadian-based mining company to create an open-pit gold mine that used cyanide for extraction in the

mountainous region of Roşia Montană, and an American based company the rights to dig for shale gas in the Pungeşti region. Because established media channels in Romania were ignoring the protests, protesters decided to march through the streets, especially through the communist-era built neighbourhoods, so that as many people as possible would be made aware of the issues. On 15 September 2013, 22 000 people rallied in Bucharest under the slogan "Uniţi, salvăm!" (United, we save!), amounting to the largest environmental protest in Europe since the fall of communism. It was labelled by the media, "The Romanian Autumn". The Romanian diaspora from London, Paris, New York, and Berlin came to support this movement, demanding a reforms in the political class back home. The movement was successful – the bills that would have permitted an environmental disaster, not only in Romania but also in neighbouring Hungary, were withdrawn from the public agenda. This was the beginning of a process of coagulation of the Romanian civil society and the creation of an active public sphere, one which was attentive and critical towards governmental moves and the infringement upon open society.

Another important step in the formation of a culture of protest was generated by a tragic event in the fall of 2015, when 64 young people died in a fire ignited by accident in the Bucharest rock club, Colectiv, during the concert of the band [Good-bye to Gravity](#). The societal reaction passed quickly from grief to revolt. The anger was directed at the public authorities whose corruption had allowed for the negligence that killed so many people and left hundreds of others scarred, physically and emotionally, for life. On 3 November 2015, united under the slogan "Corruption kills!", 35 000 people took to the streets of Bucharest. They were asking for the resignation of the government, while carrying signs that read "[The day we give in, is the day we die!](#)", a song title from the band whose members had also perished or been badly injured during the fire. The punishment of corrupt politicians and civil servants was central to these protests and eventually led to the resignation of the social-democratic government led by Victor Ponta. A new, technocratic government was to administer the country for a year, until the general election in December 2016.

Against this backdrop of continuous anti-corruption protests, the 'Pardon Bill' was proposed in late 2016. Despite the swift public reaction as well as a request by Romanian president, Klaus Iohannis, not to pass such a bill, the newly installed government chose to ignore and even ridicule the protesters, that were taking to the streets in ever increasing numbers (3 000 on 18 January, 25 000 on 22 January, 50 000 on 29 January), accusing them through loyal media channels of being bribed by George Soros. Late at night, on 31 January 2017, the government adopted an emergency ordinance (the now famous OUG13) which decriminalized corruption at many levels and rendered a decade of anti-corruption efforts by the Anticorruption Directorate more or less useless; it also cost Romania over one billion euros. On top of that, the ordinance was clearly targeting the release, or potential non-conviction, of corrupt politicians and business people. The fact that the minister of justice chose to defy the journalists in a press conference by repeatedly avoiding questions regarding the ordinance, and snapping, 29 times, "another question!", was of no help to the government either.^[11]

The reaction on social networks was immediate – at midnight, less than one hour after the news about OUG 13 came through, more than 15 000 people began protesting in front of a government building asking for the withdrawal of OUG 13, the resignation of the current government, as well as the resignation of the presidents of the two parliamentary chambers. And this should be followed by the creation of a non-corrupt social democratic government (who, having won the elections the previous December, should govern together with their allies). In addition, the reforms should continue at the administration level, one example being a transparent e-government. In spite of the freezing cold, the number of people protesting all over Romania kept growing. The peak of these protests culminated with 600 000 people taking to the streets in over 50 Romanian cities and towns, plus thousands gathering in

support in cities all over the world (London, Berlin, Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam, New York, Toronto, Brussels, Budapest, Rome, Madrid – to name just a few). The most impressive symbol of these protests was represented by 300 000 people in Bucharest lighting their smartphones (in what has been labelled 'The Lights' Revolution', 'The Common Sense Revolution', or the '2.0 Revolution'). The common denominator of these protests were the slogans "#REZIST" and "Noaptea, ca hoții! (During the night, like the thieves!). It was also an explosion of creativity, wit, and good-quality (dark) humour – the banners were improvised with the most surprising materials, from simple A4 paper to brooms sticks, and exemplified a high degree of knowledge of what a genuine rule of law, liberal democratic values and participative democracy means.^[12] Many people chose to come with their whole families and pets, especially since government-loyal media outlets had accused George Soros of giving the protesters 100 lei (21 euros) per adult, 50 lei (11 euros) per child and 30 lei (8 euros) per dog to attend.^[13] There were slogans that said things like "Dear George, if I am here, it means that the money hasn't reached my bank account yet", and BBC World News aired a short video, which quickly went viral, that explained why so many pets were present during the mass movement.^[14] Memes depicting dogs having phone conversations with George Soros and agreeing to attend the protest invaded the internet, while many dog owners applied slogans that ridiculed fake news to their dog's collars.

Until this point, Romania was rarely featured in Western media except with sports-related topics or perhaps cultural projects. However, in the winter of 2017 it became breaking news and front page matter for many mainstream international media outlets; dozens of entries dedicated to the matter appeared on BBC, Deutsche Welle, Al Jazeera, Euronews, in The Guardian and The New York Times, to name just a few. The latter two also opened online forums in which Romanians could notify the publications about corruption cases in Romania. The image of an entire society was changed through the positive terms used by international journalists, who stressed the manner in which an elite, who tried to dominate irrationally in the name of the majority, was challenged by peaceful but determined protesters – a public who eventually forced the authorities to nullify OUG 13 through a vote in parliament.

Such a large number of protesters (about 17 per cent of the population attended the protests at least once^[15]), was a demonstration of the high levels of distrust held in the political institutions and the Romanian political class. According to one study, more than half of the people who took part in the Bucharest protests considered politicians to be first and foremost serving their own personal interests, rather than the public good, and that the main agents of corruption are the post-1989 nouveau riche, i.e. the former top members of the Romanian Communist Party, but also the civil servants.^[16]

In a nutshell, the protests in Romania over the last five years turned into the most important social phenomenon since the fall of communism. They resemble the typology of the Occupy Movement: heterogeneous, trans-ideological, peaceful, urban communities, with no formal leadership or hierarchical structures. These groups make use of alternative communication networks – that is why they have been labelled the "2.0 protests".^[17] They literally occupy central locations in cities (usually a central square or a symbolic place) and perform a type of prefigurative politics that is intended to defend liberal, democratic values; it is a reaction towards, and protest against official, strategic politics, which are perceived of as being stained and corrupt. The opinion of some sociologists is that Romanian politicians should thus stop judging "the street" like they did 10–20 years ago.^[18]

From this point of view, the reaction of the Romanian public towards the events surrounding the status of the CEU is only natural – it is as if those who defend the CEU are following Isaiah Berlin's presumption that, in an open society, whatever is not forbidden is allowed. Moreover, by looking at the reaction of the Hungarian public in the CEU case, one can observe many similarities with the aforementioned

characteristics of the protests in Romania. If one looks at the trends created by mass protests that characterize the political life of Central and Eastern Europe in the last years, from Warsaw to Moscow, from Bratislava to Sofia, from Skopje to Kiev, it can be discerned that these street movements have constructed a larger culture of protest that is targeting illiberal regimes.

Conclusions: Romania and the West

For the last two decades, irrespective of the governing party or coalition, the majority of Romanians consider the country to be heading in the wrong direction. Throughout the last two and a half decades, according to the survey data of various pollsters, over half of the population is dissatisfied with political, economic and social developments in Romania. However, although it is still rather abstract for many, the EU and what it stands for is positively evaluated by Romanians, who believe that the country has improved by joining the EU: through funding, access to education, labour migration, foreign investments and anticorruption measures.^[19] At the end of 2016, 80 per cent of the respondents at the national level considered it better for Romania to stay in the EU, the country's "best friends" were considered to be France and Germany, whereas the "biggest foe" was considered to be Hungary.^[20]

A similar situation was reflected in a [GLOBSEC study](#), conducted, as it happened, during the street protests in Romania. In it, Romanians defined themselves as decidedly pro-Western (80 per cent), which was the highest percentage recorded in Eastern and Central Europe compared to Poland (49 per cent), Hungary (39 per cent) and the Czech Republic (33 per cent). There is no "in-between" position that can preserve neutrality and sovereignty, (i.e. having "the best of both worlds") for Romanians who cherish a pro-Western stance, (translated into a high standard of living or high levels of prosperity), economic growth, European identity and a sense of belonging to the West).

However, only 60 per cent of Romanians prefer a liberal democracy to an autocratic system, the latter being characterized by increased order and a strong leader. In Hungary, those in favour of a liberal democracy amounts to 71 per cent. Almost two thirds of the population in Romania prefers forms of direct democracy, such as referendums, but they also represent the most vulnerable public to fake news from Central and Eastern and Europe – 31 per cent believe they are relevant sources of information and only 51 per cent search for additional data in the media. This can be underlined by the fact that many Romanians believed that the protesters from Uniți, salvăm! or #REZIST were actually paid for by George Soros or other multinational corporations.

To summarize, one might say that there is not much appetite for authoritarian rule in Romania, but people do feel misrepresented by their government and desire more direct political participation, such as a referendum-based democracy. With the rise of illiberal democracies in Eastern and Central Europe, liberal democratic values and an open society seem to be the only valid moral alternative. These are the guarantees for individual rights, rule of law and fighting corruption. And, as the most recent developments in Romania have shown, regardless of the cause – environmental, political or related to academic freedom in neighbouring Hungary – even though it may take another electoral cycle, a large part of the population in Romania should not be underestimated when it comes to defending their rights.

Footnotes

1. More details about the activities of the Soros Foundation can be found on the [Open Society Foundation's webpage](#), retrieved 8 June 2017.
2. For instance, the national dailies *Adevărul* and *România Liberă* ran several articles related to the CEU and the political situation in Hungary, among them: Andreea Romanovschi, [Proteste de amploare la Budapesta față de legea care ar putea duce la închiderea universității înființate de George Soros](#), *Adevărul* (5 April 2017); Viorica Marin, [Comisia Europeană a deschis o procedură de infringement împotriva Ungariei în legătură cu legea privind universitățile](#), *Adevărul* (26 April 2017); Eva Galambos, [Alegerile europene ar putea însemna sfârșitul lui Viktor Orbán?](#) *Adevărul* (7 May 2017); Iulia Iancu, [FOTO + VIDEO. Mii de persoane au protestat la Budapesta, în sprijinul prestigioasei universități înființate de miliardarul George Soros](#), *România Liberă* (2 April 2017); Mihai Diac, [Parlamentul Ungariei a adoptat legea anti - Soros. Pe baza acesteia, Universitatea Central-Europeană ar putea fi închisă](#), *România Liberă* (4 April 2017); Roxana Petre, [Universitatea Central-Europeană ar putea fi închisă. Președintele ungar a aprobat legea care pune în pericol prestigioasa instituție finanțată de miliardarul George Soros](#), *România Liberă* (11 April 2017); Adina Mutar, [PREMIERĂ ISTORICĂ: UE face primul pas spre suspendarea dreptului de vot al Ungariei. Administrația Viktor Orban acuză "un atac sorosist"](#), *România Liberă* (19 May 2017). All articles retrieved on 24 May 2017.
3. [TIMPUL PREZENT – Invitați Mircea Vasilescu și Oana-Valentina Suciuc](#), live radio talk-show hosted by Matei Martin and Adela Greceanu, Radio Romania Cultural (4 April 2017), retrieved 30 May 2017.
4. Ștefan Stan, [Războiul dintre Viktor Orban și George Soros face victime colaterale: Prestigioasa Universitate Central-Europeană, fondată de miliardarul ungar în urmă cu 26 de ani, și-ar putea închide porțile](#), *Mediafax* (30 March 2017); [Zeci de mii de oameni au ieșit în stradă la Budapesta pentru a apăra Universitatea Central-Europeană](#), *Euractiv* (9 April 2017). All articles retrieved on 30 June 2017.
5. Several articles were aired on the topic, from a detailed description of the protests in Budapest, to interventions of the Hungarian MP, Kelemen Hunor: [Ioana Hașu-Georgiev](#), *Protest de amploare la Budapesta: Mii de participanți la marșul pro-CEU*, *RFI* (2 April 2017), or the intervention of anthropologist Vintila Mihailescu: [Cosmin Rusciur, Vintilă Mihailescu la RFI: Guvernul Orban atacă libertatea de gândire](#), *RFI* (3 April 2017). Articles retrieved on 30 May 2017.
6. Georgeta Gheorghe, [SRS statement of support for Central European University in Budapest](#), *Business Review* (3 April 2017), retrieved 31 May 2017.
7. Cătălin Tolontan, [In timpul guvernării PSD, Ambasada României la Budapesta sustine universitatea fondată de Soros!](#), *tolo.ro* (30 March 2017), retrieved on 5 June 2017.
8. See, for example, Diana Dutu, [Universitatea Central – Europeană de la Budapesta, invitată să se relocheze la Arad!](#), *Arad Online* (6 April 2017); [Central – Europeană de la Budapesta, invitată să se relocheze la Arad!](#), *Știri Transilvania*, *24.ro* (6 April 2017); Adriana Totorean, [Bolojan ar invita Universitatea lui Soros de la Budapesta să funcționeze în Oradea](#), *ebihoreanul.ro* (6 April 2017); [Universitatea Central Europeană, invitată să se mute la Arad după ce Ungaria vrea să-i închidă porțile](#), *Mediafax* (6 April 2017). All articles retrieved on 20 June 2017.
9. [Universitățile din România, ținta unei inițiative legislative nou-anunțate, concepute la Budapesta](#), *Euractiv* (30 March 2017); Ivona Stog, [Ponta vrea SĂ RESTRICTIONEZE prezența universităților străine în România. MOTIVUL are legătură cu miliardarul Soros](#), *Mediafax* (31 March 2017); Romulus Georgescu, [Ponta îl ia ca model pe Viktor Orban: Vrea să depună un proiect pentru înăsprirea condițiilor privind prezența universităților străine în România](#), *România Liberă* (31 March 2017), URL: <http://romanalibera.ro/politica/partide/ponta-va-depune-un-proiect-pentru-inasprirea-conditiilor-privind-prezenta-universitatilor-straine-in-romania-pe-modelul-promovat-de-viktor-orban-445152>. Articles retrieved on 20 June 2017.
10. Christopher Adam, [Attack against CEU may endanger Hungarian universities in Romania](#), *hungarianfreepress.com* (2 April 2017) retrieved on 1 June 2017, URL: <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2017/04/02/attack-against-ceu-may-endanger-hungarian-universities-in-romania/>
11. The minister eventually resigned, but to this day he is known as “the Minister ‘Another question!’”.
12. A sample of these slogans and various manners of protest can be viewed on a Facebook page called *Pancar-dar* that was put up in order to show “the most witty, funny, exciting and unprecedented banners from the protest.”
13. Alex Mihailescu, [Manipulări la RomâniaTV. Cum au reacționat internauții când au aflat că "s-a plătit 30 de lei pentru fiecare câine" prezent la protest](#), *România Liberă* (23 January 2017), retrieved 8 June 2017, URL: <http://romanalibera.ro/actualitate/eveniment/foto--video-manipulari-la-romania-tv-burtierele-au-transmis-ca-la-protestele-din-bucuresti-s-au-platit-30-de-lei-de-caine-50-de-lei-de-copil-si-100-de-lei-de-adult-438914>
14. [How cute dogs became a symbol of protest](#), *BBC World News* (12 February 2017), retrieved 8 June 2017, URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/magazine-38936570/how-cute-dogs-became-a-symbol-of-protest>
15. This is the first survey in Romania to be made through a crowd-funding campaign initiated by [Geeks for Democracy](#) (a citizens’ initiative and [CENTRAS](#) (a non-governmental organization). The funds left from the campaign were used for making various gadgets with the slogan #REZIST that were shared for free to the protesters all over the country and abroad. More details about the survey can be found here: [Isspol.ro](#), URL: <http://isspol.ro/comunicate-de-presa/conferinta-romania-2017/>. Information retrieved on 12 June 2017.

16. [CORUPȚIE ȘI CONTESTARE. 5 FEBRUARIE 2017, PIAȚA VICTORIEI](#), research report by the Centre for Political Ideas, Cesip.ro, retrieved on 27 May 2017, URL: <http://cesip.ro/cercetare-proteste-05-02-2017/>. On the same topic, see Cristina Andrei, [Cine sunt oamenii care protestează de două săptămâni în Piața Victoriei](#), Gândul (12 February 2017), retrieved on 27 May 2017, URL: <http://www.gandul.info/politica/cine-sunt-oamenii-care-protesteaza-de-doua-saptamani-in-piata-victoriei-16157923>
17. As a reaction towards the political events and the corrupt political class, two important Facebook platforms, each with over 50,000 members, have been created: [Uniți, salvăm!](#) in 2013 and [#REZISTENTA](#) in 2017. Another important initiative born in the wake of the protests is [Fondul pentru Democrație](#), a grassroots initiative that crowd sources funds for various civic projects run by various NGOs and community groups.
18. Iulia Marin, [Politicienii judeca strada ca si cum ar fi cea de acum 10–20 ani, an interview with Dumitru Sandu, professor of sociology at the University of Bucharest](#), Press One (19 February 2017), retrieved 23 May 2017.
19. [Percepțiile românilor asupra impactului aderării la Uniunea Europeană](#), an IRES research report (15 December 2016), retrieved 25 May 2017. The study evaluated the impact of European issues ten years after Romania's integration in the EU.
20. Ibid.

