



# **EVALUATION OF CORRUPTION IN ROMANIA AND BULGARIA BEFORE JOINING THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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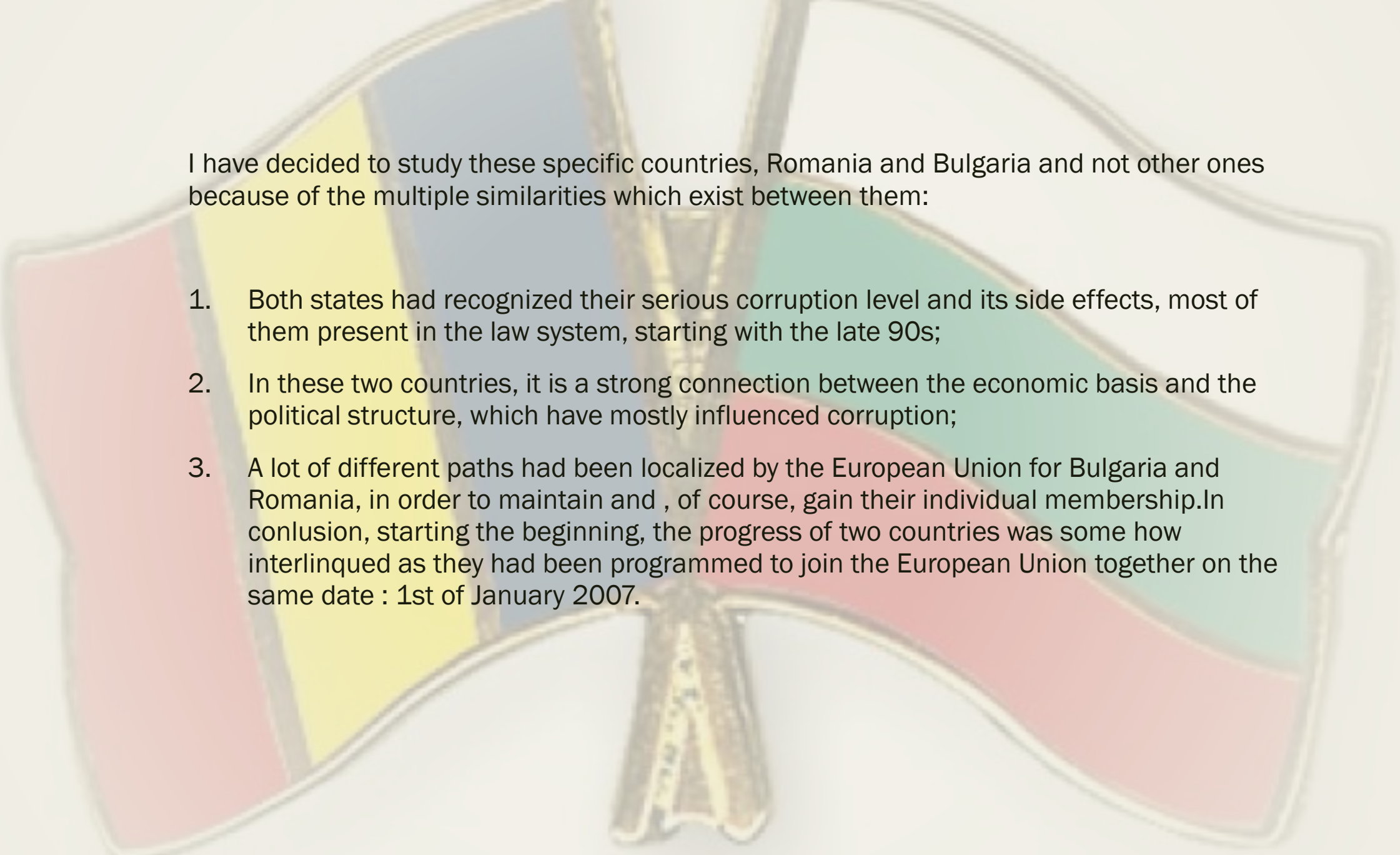


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# Introduction

- Corruption created new dimensions in all levels of modern society, reaching fresh heights, and, in the meantime, opening new challenges. In many developing countries, corruption has had a significant concussion on the process which is defining the most important rules, in order to manage their economies and societies, encoding their interests for limited advantages and impeding political and socio-economical improvement.
- Countries from Eastern Europe raised a very delicate issue to deal with, in what concerns the Europeanization, like high levels of corruption among its concerning aspects, especially for the last two countries which have been accepted in the European Union: Romania and Bulgaria.



I have decided to study these specific countries, Romania and Bulgaria and not other ones because of the multiple similarities which exist between them:

1. Both states had recognized their serious corruption level and its side effects, most of them present in the law system, starting with the late 90s;
2. In these two countries, it is a strong connection between the economic basis and the political structure, which have mostly influenced corruption;
3. A lot of different paths had been localized by the European Union for Bulgaria and Romania, in order to maintain and , of course, gain their individual membership. In conclusion, starting the beginning, the progress of two countries was somehow interlinked as they had been programmed to join the European Union together on the same date : 1st of January 2007.

# *Corruption in Romania and Bulgaria*

Since the collapse of communism, the status of corruption of the ex-communist East-European states has been a matter of controversial discussions. Concerning Bulgaria and Romania, at the end of the 1990's corruption has been publicly exposed, with the help of the mass-media.



European organizations provided qualified help for the two states in the struggle for reducing corruption and consolidate democracy, while aiming for a solid expansion of the European Union in the eastern European countries. Most of the national studies, have been published but it seems that the levels of corruption in these two countries, have not been evaluated in comparison by them, in the period before, as well as after Europeanization.



The analysis of corruption which exists in Bulgaria and Romania has not been so deeply studied, concerning the interval of time before their accession. Speaking in a more subjective opinion, the lack of studies is framing this presentation as being more interesting to the public.

In order to deeply analyze changes that exist in different levels of corruption in Bulgaria and Romania, a cross-country research had been realized from the beginning of 1999 and 2007. The final goal was to understand how corruption had been shaped by the Europeanization process in these countries. There had been analyzed three periods of time, representing important moments in the evolution of romanian and bulgarian „europeanization”.

01

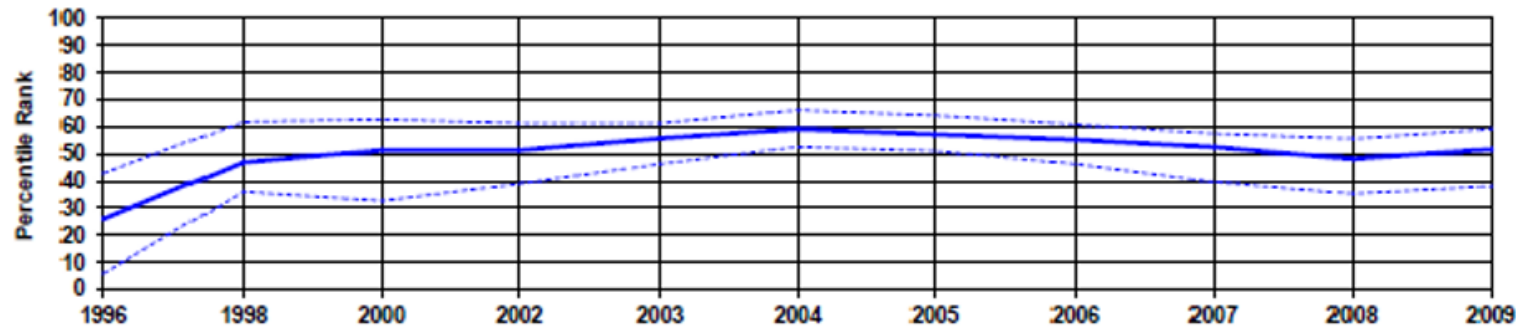
I have studied first the mid '90s, after evaluating existing data about corruption, when both of the states submitted applications for the European Union enrollment and also when first of the international reports had been broadcasted.

02

The second interesting part is given by the year of 2004, when the Accession Treaty had been signed by both discussed countries .

03

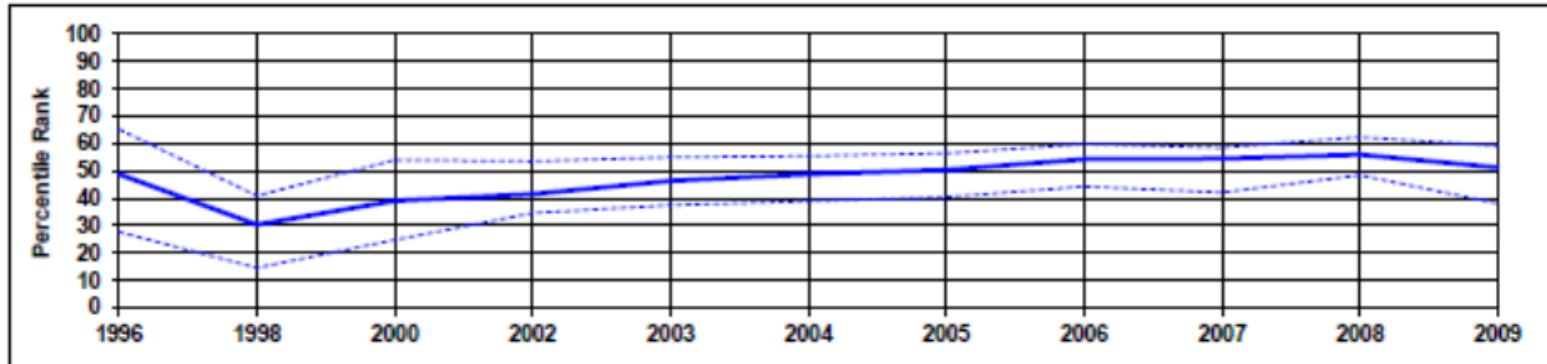
The third, final highlight is given by the day of 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2007, a turning point in the fight against corruption, when full membership was obtained.



## Data results before EU accession in Bulgaria

It can be noticed the fact that corruption levels have gone higher and higher until 2004 and, after that, it slightly regressed or remained unchanged until 2007. According to the information above, the process of integration did not have the expected impact, but maintained corruption at a relatively tolerable level. After the period of accession, the indicator of corruption expressed parts of deterioration, mainly as a result of the fact that the initial public and institutional interest (i.e. the European Union integration) was progressively gone.

## Data results before EU accession in Romania



Analyzing the Country Data Report made for Romania, it can be observed a slower, but constant evolution in time. Since 1996, Romania registered a moderate but continuous progress until 2007, when the European Union integration process took place (see chart II). Sandholtz's theory about international integration can be associated with the evolution seen in the chart under, and the importance of encouragement in the pre-accession process, as part of the efficient strategy.





# Changes established by the EU anti corruption policy

The conditions and formality of EU rules are clearly understood as they facilitate the acceptance and success for the implementation. A greater degree of transparency in implementing and creating anti-corruption environment, as well as accessing European funds, imposed serial conditions needed to be accomplished by Bulgaria and Romania in order to obtain their membership status.

The *Acquis Communautaire* had to be implemented and adopted by both countries, along with the recommendation to step up the fight against existing corrupt practices.

The integrating process of the membership agreement conditions forced the governments of Bulgaria and Romania to form new and more efficient policies against corruption. In the same time, this forced the European Union to honor the contract and offer the promised benefit: full membership and european funding and support.

These factors were acting bidirectional and represented the basis of successful conditions, based on credibility and clarity.

# Conclusions

- The process of post-accession to the EU did not reach to the predicted results at least concerning the struggle against corruption after the accession, once it we realised that the fight against corruption began to stand in the same position as in pre-accession period.
- The process of Europeanization, taken just for the pre-2007 period, led only to the stagnation of corrupt practices.
- Considering the improvement of the post-accession process, it is obvious that, in order to be more successful, the program needs some fresh encouragement which can successfully restore the lost one, disappeared after accession. This strategy will recover the power of the European Union leverage and will lead to an increasing fight concerning national corruption.
- Despite the fact that the levels of corruption remained quite high in both east european countries, the pre-accession procedure obviously led to a positive progress in the corruption status in Romania and Bulgaria, which can maintain hope for reaching in the future to a generally accepted European medium-level.

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