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Is this way of pleasing the EC in the short term the real reform the country needs for the long term? I doubt it. We went through a similar experience in 2005, and ever since we have been repeatedly amending that legislation.

The fight against high-level corruption continues to be of concern to many Romanians. There have been many mistakes, and a badly written and contradictory constitution led to some strange interpretations. However, some cases are currently in courts and only when we have the final verdicts will we be able to say if the investigations were conducted properly, if those persons were guilty or not. This is how the rule of law works, right?

Last but not least, the Euro-enthusiasm that existed before 2007 has not really diminished, although the understanding of such a complex structure as the EU is still difficult. However,

every day more people realise the EU is not “milk and honey”, but hard work in order to absorb the funds that would help us develop faster. At the same time, there are two sides to the EU for Romanians working in other member states – some feel they can now fulfil their dreams, while others face discrimination on a daily basis. But more and more Romanians at home or abroad understand they are EU citizens and therefore they are equal to all the others. They are smart, hard working and skilled, and many of them will continue to live and work in different EU countries, in spite of the current economic crisis and growing unemployment.

I doubt whether this sentiment of belonging to the EU will be reflected in the turnover for the European parliament elections in June. With four elections in only one year – and bearing in mind that by June the consequences of the economic crisis will be affecting everyone – it is important to have realistic expectations.

In conclusion, there might not be fireworks just two years after Romania became an EU member, but I honestly believe this was the best thing for my country and for the EU as a whole. ★

Wind of change

Rumiana Jeleva explains why Bulgaria is still struggling to adapt two years after its EU accession

Two years after its accession to the EU, Bulgaria is still trying to find its place and role in the union. While there have been successes as well as shortcomings, Bulgaria currently seems to be hanging in the air, uncertain of its future path. Looking at the changes since January 2007, one has to conclude that the glass is neither half full nor half empty. What the country now needs is a clear European perspective, a solution to its most salient problems and an honest and sincere leadership. With European and parliamentary elections coming, 2009 could finally bring to Bulgaria the change and improvement its citizens have been counting on for a long time.

When Bulgaria joined the EU on 1 January 2007, it was widely believed that all our problems would soon be resolved. Now, two years after our accession, our record is less positive than we all would have wished. While one must admit that

the expectations of the public in some cases were probably not very realistic, it is fair to say that a certain lack of political will is evident. It seems that the reforms and integration of Bulgaria have slowed down majorly since the accession. The political will of the government and the elite to push forward necessary reforms has seized. As a consequence, we are still lagging behind in terms of judicial reform, the fight against corruption and organised crime, as well as administrative capacity. The negative progress report by the European commission in July 2008 was the sad climax of a number of failed policies by our unsuccessful government. The resulting freezing of EU funds was a catastrophe for our country, municipalities, cities and villages, especially at a time when the impact of the financial crisis is already felt in everyday life.

Despite all of the negative news, one must not forget that there is also positive news coming from Bulgaria. First of all,