*Information about interviewee:*

*Claudiu Crăciun is a lecturer of European Politics at the National School of Political Science and Public Administration in Bucharest, Romania. Interview conducted in Bucharest, Romania.*

*R= Respondent – Claudiu Crăciun*

*I=Interviewer – Sam Wrighton*

I: Yes, I mentioned in my studies about the political impact of dual citizenship policies. Within the case of Romania, looking at The Hungarian state policies, their entire impact here on the domestic political landscape. And the relationship between Hungry and the Romanian state. I've had the Hungarian perspective.

R: Yeah

I: Would you be able to talk about how these policies are seen from Romanian perspective, from a perspective of the state?

R: Okay. Well, I'm not really qualified to talk about the perspective of ethnic Hungarians, of Romanian citizenship, maybe I can reflect on how the kind of the political establishment sees the politics of Hungry where it’s Romania and its minority. I have to say the framework of historical reasoning it is somehow paradoxical. There was irritation with the extension of rights and possibilities for ethnic Hungarians in Romania, by the Hungarian state, it was proved that they have connections, and they could be loyal to the Hungarian state while living in Romania. And in the same time, I think it was a, even from the part of the nationalist there was a sign of relief. Because, ultimately, if they leave, and to go to Hungary, and work, that means that the demography of Romania changes to end of those who want a more uniform and ethnically based state. So I didn’t hear or see any kind of full on attacks on Hungry actually. It’s much more kind of business as usual. So the general framework is, well, you know, the Hungarians are never kind of okay with the fact that we took Transylvania and they could take any opportunity to improve their ties with Hungry and, you know, maybe at some point, kind of strive for more autonomy, even though we're a unitary state. So I don’t think it was very, very specific act towards the specific policy that runs, citizenship or permits or work permits or any other kind of facility. Not from what I’ve seen. Maybe I'm not like the political scientist. I observe the political life generally. So but, you know, only kind of the big waves, not like, very specific and know how, for example, I didn't know how it was his lead was perceived by national communities in Transylvania, I have no idea. I'm judging from Bucharest.

I: And is that the position from Bucharest, this this was done. These can stay policies are done in order to attract labour force to Hungry. Is that why Hungry are doing this?

R: Actually looking at how events and processes are perceived In Romania, I wouldn't say that the socio-economic perspective was the main one, I think it was more identity. The framework of identity, loyalty, rather than socio-economic interest on the part of Hungary. Because frankly, I do not know when all these policies were designed, there was a shortage of labour in Hungary, or how the state of the economy are? I don't know that. Maybe it was the case? And I do I don't know what. But from what I've seen with feeders and Urban It seems that it’s around identity and ethnic blood ties rather than an instrumental, instrumental policy towards, you know, getting or solving a specific economic problem. I don't know.

I: The cynical side of me would say that lots and lots of money that you are spending in Transylvania in other parts of their neighbourhood purely for ideological sorry, surely for sentimental reasons or for I don't know.

R: Well, when you spend that much money, I think it's I think it's beyond you know, the kind of labour shortage, I think it's, it's a bigger plan. You know Hungary and historical trauma; historical narratives are very present in their psyche. Having to see here in 2000. I lived there for 8 months so I know a bit about Hungary, and it was always there. And I mean, even more now than then they were like, kind of the champions of European integration. Yeah, but I know that they have a very active policy to support with them at a, which is the remaining Hungary party. Cultural association. And I know they were troubles within this relationship, because at some point, there were some alternate parties to them. And they were more radical or closer to Budapest. Apparently, they managed to keep its kind of monopoly on the political representation of the Hungarian minority. I don't know how, maybe doing some concessions or moving closer to the vision of urban. Frankly, you know, they’re still the most powerful political action representing the other options they didn’t manage. Partly because they also were part of the dealings at the central level, they put their weight, like 6 / 7% in supporting a government or a certain policy, so they were very transactional. So they were power plays, power players at the national level, despite their small size. Even now, I mean, the government survives because the Hungarians are there to support them.

I: I met with a professor from Cluj-Napoca and he had a theory that from 1996 Romanian government and the Hungarian government came to a tacit agreement that the Hungarian state with great ties with Hungarian community here in Romania, in order for them to eventually leave Romania and move to Hungary. Do you think this would be plausible as a theory?

R: In 96?

I: Yes. Well that’s when it began. He argues that since then things are progressing towards this goal of from the Romanian perspective of having less Hungarians in Romania. And from Hungarian perspective, having these communities migrate to Hungary.

R: Maybe I don’t know the professor, but I trust him because he's probably Hungarian and he's a political scientist or a sociologist. So I'll trust his judgment. I just think how it would play in the general kind of framework of in 96. After sixty years, we had the democratic opposition winning the elections, and the Hungarians were supporting that coalition, the Democratic Convention. So they were part of the democratization wave post-98, because until 96, there was a coalition around what is now the Social Democrats, which are like the successor party of the Communist Party, which was kind of a national Communist Party. Very nationalistic. So, so I will, whether I was part of this kind of democratic wave, and I don't really see the new government then. Like the democratic conventions, internal parties. Being so nationalistic and so organized, and so strategic in order to be part of this kind of deal. Basically, there was a lot of things to reform in 96 to 2000 it was a total chaos in the economy, property. The Hungarians were there to support the government and I think it was. I think it was more short term. They wanted to support the Hungarians in the parliamentary and so on. They stayed up even afterwards. I mean, the, from 2000 to 2004, were in very friendly terms with the Hungarians. They were not participating in the government, but they were on very friendly terms. And I see that, I mean, I think they were instrumentalising the relationship in order to create a better image in front of European authorities. And I think that was the kind of the overarching goal, the most important goal. And they wanted to be seen as modern democratic for minority, even the social level as they were, again, nationalistic but the Europeanization project from Canada came on the top overriding so everything was back to itself. I think that's the most important thing that happened in European integration. And that included also doing concessions to Hungarians in Romania, normalizing the relationship with the Hungarian government and trying to kind of create as little opposition as possible from different kind of actors and Vito players inside and outside, I think that was, I don’t think they were thinking too. And I think historically was a good bad because if you have Romania and Hungary both in union then you have a framework that helps you solve issues. We have to see some figures, maybe, you know, the migration, kind career. So if you have like a big search after 96, or after 2000, or after 2004, when Hungary joined. There might be a case, but I didn't know them. So I don't I don't have the statistics.

I: And It's interesting, you mentioned the cards that remain yours, giving out to the ethnic Romanians transport or ethnic Romanians. Do you think they've learned these practices from Hungary?

R: Yeah. I mean Romania always had a cultural policy with the minority around them, but it was very mixed. Because there was one case with Moldova which is considered like a twin state. And then you have Ukraine, you can’t really go to because Romania is a really big state. And then you have communities in Hungry, they’re not too many. I mean, the size of the Romanian minorities, Romanian kind of connected minorities didn't allow the Romanian state with the exception of Moldova to consider them as a big economic resource, I think. And the problem of labour shortages is very recent it struck in like, two or three years. So I think it's, we had our great deal of cultural projects, like building schools, libraries, you know giving scholarships, and some typical, cultural policy in Eastern Europe. But the green card is kind of economics.

I: When was that introduced?

R: This week or something?

I: Oh really?

R: Yeah. Maybe this is, I mean, actually the head went to jail after the European elections. Second day, they had like a final decision to take him to jail.

I: Three and a half years

R: It’s very Shakespearean. You lose elections and then you’re in jails. Before that. Speaking this social democratic government party is not at all to blame. They kind of frame it from the perspective of the employers who don’t have workforce. They say, okay, we'll help you give our fellow Romanians who knows a bit of language, drinkers to come into work. But he was the driver was the sector business sector was complaining that they don’t have any people who work in their businesses.

I: And the theory being it's better to import Romanians, ethnic Romains than those from elsewhere

R: At this point, I think the capital of Romania is so desperate that will import anything. Vietnamese are very present in the construction sector. I mean it’s funny. Romanians are kind of in the construction sector, everyone in Europe. One of the main working force is the construction sector. While we have Vietnamese now working construction sector.

I: And how much of this is down to the EU accession?

R: About what?

I: You said that there's been a big portion of the labour force leaving the country.

R: Well the accession made it possible. So basically you had a lot of people choosing to survive this way. Because in Urania, there was no, even if you have work, we have the highest percentage of people poor while at work or even conventional work like a kind of a on the contract. Because you have the minimum wage, which is very low. So basically, everyone started slowly moving towards Europe, and they went for, you know, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, UK later on there were different waves. So the EU made it all possible. If you didn’t have that opportunity. I think the Romanian history really like history would have been very different, because it would be much more conflictual than it was. Millions of people in poverty economically. And sooner or later you have protests and street fights and so on. The EU kind of relieves the pressure. So In this sense, kind of stabilize the political system and in the same time to remittances stabilize the economic system, which was set on survival mode.

I: And do you see this trend continuing?

R: Yeah. People are leaving everyday we’d lose like 50,000 people. Yeah.

I: I guess it's difficult to stop.

R: Romania has the largest part of its population aboard. Actually, after Syria is the single largest population movement on peacetime. So Romania develops a very special relationship with the migration. Something that is not seen in any case, because it's unique. For example, in the EU elections, you have thousands and thousands of people queuing in front of the conciliates and polling stations. And they were like, they're like 1000 people outside at 9 o clock when they were like shouting, police intervene in several cases. They were, they wanted to vote. Many thousands didn’t actually manage. So this is one thing, you know, you don't see that with any other any other EU members. Also, it's becoming very economically is very important. The migration acts. Basically, the kind of older part of the population is in lifeline. And of course, you have problems with many people living abroad and leaving their kids. I mean they would like to take their kids, but they’re not as mobile they do not have the same advantages as a workforce as kids. Being more mobile and being more forced to leave their kids with family, you know grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, and whole generations of emotionally deprived and stricken kids. And this is new, you have basically a generation of youth. So from this perspective of migration, I think it developed very specific problems and reactions. Yeah, I don't think it was because I came from a protest and the employees associations, they just want to keep those salaries down. At the aggregate level is irrational because everyone will leave but they think maybe there will be enough people still to work in 300 years. Yeah. It's I mean, we don't see the migration stopping.

I: When I was last week I was in Ukraine. Talking to an Ethnic Hungarian political figure, when I was asking questions about the state policy of Hungary in Ukraine. They some got a defensive and said, well, we're not the only ones doing it in the Romanian government even now hundreds and thousands of passports in Ukraine.

R: Really?

I: I've never heard of this before. I was wondering whether you had.

R: No, it happens in Moldova

I: In Moldova.

R: But not, maybe just a rumour. I think it should be official data.

I: Its official data that only Romanian state department would have.

R: Maybe you can ask it.

I: Yeah

R: You can fill a request.

I: Yeah, I’ll try that. I understand. Over the years, there's been a few waves of Romanian nationalism and symbolic actions taken against the Hungarian community. What is the situation now?

R:

It's a big mix. I think nationalistic body is the best. They're very nationalistic, and like, kind of more generic way. For example, they're attacking Soros or his influence. This doesn't spill over into treating Hungarian’s differently, mainly because they were stable partner for them. So this is the big party. And then, of course, you have the smaller parties, and you don't have like, big nationalist parties in Romania. I mean we have like 1%, 2%, 3%. They are more against Hungarians. Right. And occasionally, they kind of they go to protest in the Hungarian communities. You know, there is some like crazy guy who burns the Romanian flag. This is the kind of event that inflames social media. But overall, I don't see you guys are very strong Hungarian sentiment. Oddly enough, you have a reaction from the most concopulous circles. A modern modernize or democratised circles like bourbon soldiers saying that, Oh, it's an old party. And what pestle is doing to the Romanian majority of them or is doing to their own Hungarian minority. So the package with the person, which is actually the relationships between the opposition right now, which is kind of right-wing opposition. They don't see, they don't seem to get along. Because usually the right wing in Romania, they were seen as the most powerful leader for European forces. They were not credible enough to do it. But still, they were. They wanted more democracy in Europe tradition. While the Social Democrats were of course pro-European, but at the same time, they didn't want transformation to be so fast. So basically, I think what America a problem with some parts of the population has, I'm not sure how it stands within the community. So I don't think it's, we had a nationalist candidate, independent candidate in the elections. He is a person who was very active in relationship with Moldova. He was working towards the reunification in Romania.

I: What’s his name?

R: Georgia Sydney. He's an ex-football fan. And he also has tried to create some events. To provoke the Hungarian minority. He got 100,000 votes, 100,000 votes. Not enough to get into European Parliament. Probably the kind of the nationalistic eSports was taken by the president who were more interesting to say, well, the big guys in Brussels, they're playing double standards, Typical Polish and Hungarian, this was. So It wasn't directed against the Hungarians in the countries, which has a problem of credibility with the Romanian majority. They are always governing, always making deals while the others are stealing. So basically, that kind of scapegoating them a bit. Which is not good for me? And you see that from the opposition. Say, for example, oh, we have the censorship motion and the Hungarians didn't vote for him. So they like the themes, you don’t create a coalition with them program why should they vote.

I: Yesterday, my meeting with professor he said that there are approximately 1092 pieces of legal text, which refers to the minority issues in Romania. And that this is substantial, and there’s a complex, complex structures to allow for minority rights here in Romania and at the grassroots level it doesn't have the political will carry some of these through. Would you agree with that?

R: I do not know if there is such a large number of provisions. Again, I trust the source against political will also not very knowledgeable in local politics in Transylvania. I would say, well I'm not qualified to say that. I would say it’s a general problem. We have a lot of legislation and in many respects, the state doesn't have the capacity or the will to kind of put them through in any area, economic or social systems or culture. So I'm not sure if it's a specific problem with the lack of implementation.

I: Just a bureaucratic kind of.

R: Yeah, it's kind of a general weak capacity on the Romanian state to do anything from organizing polls abroad. You know, getting taxes from companies and doing whatever. I wouldn't be surprised to see that; it is not a strong political will from the part of the Romanian bureaucracy which is remaining to carry on with the minority and I have a hypothesis. To the extent those minority provisions are not specific to Hungarians. You have a big problem if they applied to Roma. We live in a very racist society. Racism is highly institutionalized. So there I could, I can sense a kind of, the opposition which is a cultural and political one based on racism.

I: So there might be a worry there is too many rights to be provided for right now, our unity might elevate it.

R: Yeah. Yeah. I just don't like them so, you know, dirty, they're thieves. And they're making ourselves you know, like, in the UK, I mean, they go and beg and they’re making this country look bad. You know, they, they steal, and they beg in Italy and everywhere, they’re not Romanian, so they should change their name from Roman to Gypsies. It's kind of like popular casual racism and of course in the bureaucracy, you have this kind of people working I don’t know if that person does stuff for Roma. In Hungary I think we have a very stratified ways of looking at minorities. For example, we have a German-born president. Germans are perceived as being serious, more serious than Romanians. So they're part of the minority, which is not threatening as a number to the, you know, you had the actually the same year the president won the elections we have the World Cup and Germany beat Brazil. I think the batter because 1% of the votes is was because Germany won the World Cup, I’m pretty sure. Then you have the Hungarians, which of course they are perceived as more Western than Romanians. But their size and the historical context makes, makes them problematic. In the sense they have their mother state which protects them. So there are some territorial concerns also. So it’s different Germans are good and not threatening. And Hungarian feel superior towards us and they are. And then you have all kinds of minorities (unclear) and then the Roma, which is the largest minority far. With different degrees of integration, different types of communities, different types of cultures, habits and so on. Generally I think and I think there was a big factor in stopping the kind of the pro minority policy regarding the other, in the same time they also benefited from the say the political clout. The Germans and Europeans. Because you cannot, you cannot exclude them if they have some conditions. They should also enjoy them. So it very much depends on what kind of minority your part of the really good minority. If you’re in the Roma minorities, it’s difficult.

I:

Has there has been a greater division between the ethnic Hungarians and the ethnic Romanians. Would you agree with that?

R: Where?

I: In Transylvania.

R: I do not know that. I would trust the local stories or sociologist or community workers saying that this is the case. But I don't know. I really don't know that. I don't know it’s difficult for me to maybe you have, what would be the motive for that? I mean, what raise this division.

I: There is one theory that is it will be a divide and conquer sort of mentality from a few days. So its push, push away the African Americans and then get closer towards the motherland. Okay. Not being looked after in Romania and perhaps it’s better to come back to Hungary. That's one theory I’ve heard.

R: Yeah, but I don't see how that would influence the policies of the Romanian state.

I: No, no, no. So these people have argued that has foster this division by making communities more insular by providing greater, by providing funding opportunities through Hungarian only institutions, like churches, by spending money on private media companies in Hungarian.

R: Make sense. It makes sense. I empirically, I cannot confirm. But it makes sense of it. You know?

I: Is there is there still a fear that the territory ambitions of Szerkerland and some parts of Transylvania. Is that still a fear in the Romanian state?

R: I think so. Yeah. Sometimes I have the feeling that is over exaggerated. I probably part of the security establishment maintains, what probably they think is a healthy those of distrust. But the seculars, they’re kind of small and isolating the middle of the country. Well, actually, I don't see any moves that direction. I mean, we don't have any rationalization projects that would benefit them more. We have some moves from the Transylvanian mayors to go for European funds separately from the centre. So I'm a bit worried I was a bit worried that this was in still a competitive dynamic and that would be possibly coupled with an identity factor. And to have like a new legal or a new independent catalogue in Eastern Europe. I did a case at some point, So I would say that the big worry is not necessarily, and I think this is also strategy, if there is any, not to go for Bulgarian-lead closer to Hungarian Pennsylvania. But rather going for a multicultural Transylvania, in which Hungarians have a big say. In having a big say that means also Hungary has a bigger saying in that. So, I would say that the bet will be more regionalist multicultural developed project. Rather than outward territorial. And this has the advantage that it fits very well with the culture. Because the Transylvanians, they think of themselves as being more modern and serious and developed and civilized. Than the southern part the eastern part Moldova and Malika. So if the if the history still important, because if you read or others historians of Romania you will see that there was always a struggle to modernize this country and Transylvania was somehow ahead and southern and eastern part were more linked with the Russian Empire, the Ottoman Empire. Trying to elevate and elevate themselves to become more independent. The modernization acts were through Transylvania. Across occupations which still are an important obstacle for the integration of the country. You have like this very high mountain range, dividing your country in two. And the highways cross it and we don't have it. We don't have a highway from Moldova to Transylvania. So yeah, if you take this approach, I think there is more room for a regional project in which Hungarians together with unhappy Romanians can join forces to create a nice autonomous region in Romania maybe. Bur Romanians in Transylvania also have their dose of nationalist. So I don't see any big driver for this. Whatever supports this kind of special Transylvanian project, which tends to be where it's autonomy oriented. I think they will lose a lot of election support in the Romanian majority. Still, I mean, it’s suicide. So I don't see anyone who would touch it, actually, from the Romanian politicians and Romanian parties. Maybe a breakaway party from the big ones.

I: And if I could ask just one more question about the funding?

R: Yeah sure.

I: So year on year there's massive increases in funding coming from the Hungarian state. Do you think there will be a point where the Romanian state will say, stop, this is enough? Or will they say this is fine by us because we can use our budget elsewhere?

R: First, I didn't know what the instruments are. The limit of that funding, really.

I: Diplomatic. Because it’s all coming through legal channels.

R: Yeah. They can make a scandal, they can make an issue yeah, but I don't know how would be possible to maybe monitor better organization. So first, I don't know if there would be a legal possibility for that. Second, I know that the Hungarian are very active in promoting the only within the public institutions no meaning, so I don't see any sign of disengagement. On the contrary, I'm giving you the example of the Romanian cultural institute that I know. They have a vice president even that they are not governing. So the Romanian cultural season, which is promoting the remaining culture group, and they have a lot of money, they participate in festival, they translate books. So they have a vice president they’re not affected by the turmoil. It’s there, always there. Also in the education, industry. I don’t know if they have a state secretary, but for sure they have a direction for education in minority languages. So I don’t see any disengagement. On the contrary, their policies to have people in kilos defending the Hungarian community. I don't know about the funding. And it's not clear for me how it evolved. If it is more or less. I said I have no idea what's his policy of feeding money there. I have no idea. I had no idea. If it’s a broader plan involving other actor like Russia. Russia supports the independence. Independence movements in Europe I mean. In your Catalonia Liga. Say you're thinking about that. It’s very general knowledge. It’s not even knowledge is general perspective that I have. It’s not my field.

I: Can I just ask you a question about Moldova?

R: Yeah, Sure. Sure

I: Romania has a close relationship with Moldova?

R: Yeah

I: Has this been affected by Russian involvement in Ukraine, Georgia. I understand Trans history is a problem. The Hungarian State has Romania provided any support?

R: Romania has, I don’t know what its policy. I don’t know. And I see all kinds of people, apparently, we're supporting an oligarch. Entrepreneurial oligarchs were like playing Russian Romania while keeping Moldova, of course there was concern because you suddenly you saw active Russia in Ukraine and okay working for proxies which work in proxies. And you have, still have Russian troops in those cities, didn't even need proxies. So there was a concert. It was a sign of resurgent Russia and also concern with Southern Ukraine because it is south-eastern Ukraine it's there, it's not close to Romania. In the kind of wider Black Sea you become worried so yeah, there was a there was a concern with Russia and of course you have problems in Russia train change the elections and people felt the Russian influence through the traditional threats and ballistics or whatever. We started seeing a lot of European discourse, nationalist discourse that was taken over by Russian channels. Of course they work with whatever is there I don't think they invented some issue which was not there I mean, mistrust in the European institution is there. They just kind of inflated. Yeah, results of the election so that whatever the influence, it’s not big. I don’t know what Moldova, it’s also very interesting what happens in Moldova migration and its failed statement. It's, it's tragic what happens in Romania, but Moldova is in more trouble.