

Romania: a stricter vetting law is adopted with elements of decommunisation

On 19 May, the Romanian parliament amended the vetting law by imposing a five-year ban on performing important public functions by former senior representatives of communist authorities and officers and associates of the secret police, Securitate. The law may cause changes in the managements of state-controlled companies and prevent some MPs from participating in the elections in 2012.

The amendment was supported by all parties in parliament, with the exception of the post-communist Social Democratic Party (PSD). The newly adopted changes make the vetting act definitely stricter. Until now it has imposed criminal liability for making a false vetting statement, and not for collaborating with the regime itself. The amendment imposes a five-year ban on holding important functions at state-controlled institutions for former members of the State Council, the Council of Ministers, heads of diplomatic agencies, militia chiefs and inspectors and officers and associates of the Securitate, who held those functions between 6 March 1945 and 22 December 1989. They will not be able to hold such posts as: president, MP (also in the European Parliament), member of the government, head of the presidential administration, presiding judge of the Supreme Court, attorney general, chief of staff, ombudsman, president of the National Integrity Agency (ANI), mayor of Bucharest, member of the management board of state-controlled companies and state institutions dealing with research into communism.

The law is likely to come into force since President Traian Basescu has promised to ratify it soon. There is little chance that it will be rejected by the Constitutional Court (the law has been approved by the parliamentary human rights commission, among other bodies).

A direct effect of the entry into force of this law will be the loss of jobs for those members of management boards of state-controlled companies who collaborated with the communist regime. The MPs and mayors who will be covered by the restrictions will still be able to continue their mandates won in elections but they will not be allowed to run for election in 2012. The new regulations will most of all affect PSD. For this reason, the main beneficiary of the new law will be its key political rival, the pro-presidential Democratic Liberal Party. <dab>