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Project: The Church-State Relation in Romania: Towards Centralization or Modularity?
Group mentor: Associate Professor Zsolt Enyedi

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The academic group mentor is Zsolt Enyedi, Associate Professor at the Central European University, Budapest. The policy individual mentor is Gabriel Andreescu, co-chair and expert on ethnic and religious minorities, Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Romania - The Helsinki Committee.

April 2004 – July 2004: After participating in the first IPF Policy Workshop and establishing with the group mentor the directions of documentation and analysis, I started the literature review and contacting the individuals to be interviewed. The first contacts were established with the representatives of religious denominations and the first interviews were scheduled for July 2004.

July 2004 – September 2004: The largest part of the interviews were taken in this period. As detailed in the interviews section of the project's webpage I took 10 interviews with representatives of different religious denominations. With several religious denominations the contacts did not produce the possibility to have a direct meeting for an interview. The state secretary of cults postponed the meeting and the interview until January 2005. In the meantime after the elections he was later changed by another person. I had an interview with the expert on interdenominational cooperation from the State Secretariat of Cults. Another three interviews were taken to officials of NGO's interested in the inter-denominational cooperation (Prison Fellowship; Open Society Foundation Bucharest; AIDROM Foundation Bucharest). Some of the religious denomination leaders were directly involved in church-based NGOs so the interviews approached the issues of their experiences with the NGO sector and development potential of their activities. In May-June 2004 I organized in Bucharest an opinion poll together with the Romanian Society of Political Science. In the questionnaire I included a battery of questions concerning attitudes toward the church – state relation, the church – NGO relations, and the churches involvement in political life. Unfortunately, due to problems like voluntary activity of the student interviewers, the Romanian Society of Political Science was not able to obtain a small margin of error for the opinion poll (5%). However, I used the results as a testing of the questions that finally I was able to use in a panel survey organized together with three colleagues, before the 2004 general elections. I collected other quantitative (socio-demographic) data from the National Institute of Statistics.

October 2004 – January 2005: After the September IPF Policy Workshop I spent three months for documentation and interviews in Washington D.C. at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, with an extension offered by the IPF Program. During the three months program I reviewed literature that was not

accessible in Romania or at CEU Budapest, which was offering me new theoretical information that finally influenced and changed the initial approach of my research. I participated at a round table organized by the Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty Washington D.C. Office, on the church-state relation in former communist countries. In November I participated at a public workshop organized at Georgetown University with the subject on the major issues that influenced the US presidential elections. Among the most important issues discussed were the church-state relations and the religious factors that influenced individual and community electoral preferences. I proposed a paper on inter-denominational cooperation for delivery at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. I took six interviews with officials from think-tanks involved in the church-state relations and inter-denominational cooperation; officials from the USAID, Bureau for Europe and Asia; The White House Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives, from the Department of State – Office of International Religious Freedom and from the Democratic Party – Central Electoral Staff. The interviews offered me new information regarding the American experience on the church based NGOs and about potential threats of the church-state symbiosis on public attitudes, public policies and political competition. Together with Marina Popescu, Gabriel Badescu from University of Cluj and IPF Fellow Alumnus, and with Grigore Pop-Eleches from Princeton University I organized a pre-electoral panel survey with two waves of field-interviewing. In the panel survey I introduced a battery of questions based partially on the questions I already tested in the May 2004 survey, regarding the church-state relations and the public attitudes concerning churches in general. The panel survey was organized in November and December 2004. Due to problems linked with the initial wave of the survey the final databases were delivered to us later than we expected, a fact that influenced a little the drafting of research conclusions and recommendations. These databases are currently used by the four organizers of the survey for an article to be delivered for publication to the East European Politics Society, a journal edited by the Government and Politics Department from the University of Maryland. As well, they will be used in further articles that I will write and in my recommendations for the State Secretariat for Cults.

February 2005 – July 2005: I re-contacted officials that expressed in 2004 their willingness to have a meeting for an interview in the first half of 2005. Only the newly nominated State Secretary for Cults (Mr. Adrian Lemeni) was open for an interview. During the interview the State Secretary showed interest for the conclusions of my research project and of the policy paper, for the recommendations that I propose in order to increase inter-denominational contacts and cooperation, the recommendation for financially supporting such cooperation. He also showed interest for other experiences of church-based NGO cooperation in other countries. During the meeting he expressed his openness for a future cooperation especially as concerns a national workshop organized by the State Department for Cults on November 1st, 2005 with officials from all the recognized religious denomination, with the main subject being the church-state relations, the opportunities for churches' involvement in social issues and the financial opportunities that churches could access in order to better manage their social programs. We agreed to continue the discussions about this meeting in the coming weeks. At the national workshop I will present the main results of my IPF research. I will thus have the best possibility to encourage the churches to get aware of the large possibilities for funding outside the state subsidies, in order to increase their independence from the political influence. These financial resources

(available for NGOs involved in social projects) are accessible for churches and their social projects, indirectly through church-based or church-related NGOs. That is why in my presentation I will encourage the church representatives to organize their organizational resources in order to have access to these funds.

At the IPF Policy Workshop in April 2005 I delivered a public lecture at CEU, in which I presented some results and preliminary conclusions of my research and policy paper. I am currently working on a book based on my IPF documentation and research, with the subject of inter-denominational cooperation as a new approach of the church-state relations in Romania. I started to contact different publishing houses from Romania in order to publish it. I will continue my interest in the field of church-state relations after finishing the IPF program, and I intend to write more articles based on this research, to publish and deliver them in conferences. I will participate at the working group on religion and politics from the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association to be held in Washington D.C. between August 30 and September 4, 2005. I will present an article on the church-state relations in Romania at the Romanian Society of Political Science Annual Conference to be held in November 3-5, 2005. As well, I will propose two articles based on my IPF research: one at the ECPR Joint Sessions to be held in April 25-30, 2006 in Cyprus, and the other at the First ECPR Graduate Conference to be held in September 7-9, 2006.