

# SPEECH

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

RULE OF LAW PROGRAM  
SOUTH EAST EUROPE  
THORSTEN GEISSLER

January 2015

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## **SPEECH HELD BY THORSTEN GEISSLER ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCHING OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION-STRATEGY FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE ORGANIZED BY THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO ROMANIA**

BUCHAREST, 30 JANUARY 2015

On behalf of the Rule of Law Program South East Europe of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation I would like to express my profound thanks to the Embassy of the United States of America and in particular to Chargé d'Affaires Dean Thompson for the honour of having us tonight on the occasion of the launch of your anti-corruption strategy. We welcome the initiative of US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland to increase the efforts against corruption in some European countries including Romania. The US Embassy with its broad expertise has already identified the areas where progress is necessary and can be made and I think it is a very good decision to pay special attention to asset forfeiture, transparency initiatives such as Open Government Partnership and the "Transparency through Consultation Action Plan." And it is a good decision to outreach to young leaders who share our values.

Supporting the fight against corruption is also one of the core missions of the Rule of Law Program of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation not only in Romania but in the whole

region. In the past nine years since the program was set up we have organized and supported many projects aiming on intensifying the fight against corruption and achieving better results.

Let me mention a few of them: the conference on "Fight against corruption in Germany" with Dr. Ole Schroeder, Parliamentary State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Monica Macovei, MEP, a round-table on the topic of "Consolidation of the General Anti-corruption Policy in Romania - Preventive measures", a project on "Online instruments supporting fight against corruption", a project on "Prevention and Fight against Corruption in the Danube Region", the "Regional Conference on "Promoting best practices in fighting high-level corruption and on asset recovery" as well as the Sustainability Index of the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA).

We have done this in cooperation with Romanian partners, with institutions and NGOs but also with embassies from different countries. In this context I would like to

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mention that since my arrival in Romania four years ago I have regularly met with diplomats from the US Embassy to discuss rule of law issues including the fight of corruption. These meetings showed clearly that we share the same values and I am very grateful to the US Embassy for their interest in cooperating with us.

Like the US Embassy we want to support and empower young leaders who want to change Romania for the better. In 2010 we launched our Leaders for Justice Program, since then each year we selected 20 gifted and motivated young lawyers, invited them to training units and study visits to Germany. We just selected the 6<sup>th</sup> generation and in a few weeks they will attend their first training units. For us a good lawyer does not only have a very knowledge of substantive and procedural law and is able to apply it, for us a good lawyer stands for integrity and clear ethical values. And we are reaching out for young people who are able and who want to be leaders, people who are conscious of their responsibility as citizens and who want to develop civil society in this country. I am very happy that the US Embassy gives our alumni the chance to meet the alumni your various like-minded programs, this is an excellent opportunity to extend already existing networks and I thank you very much for your initiative.

We are conscious of the fact that when we talk about the fight against corruption there is still a lot of work ahead of us. But we also know and acknowledge that Romania has made considerable progress especially in the field of fighting high level corruption. Institutions like DNA and ANI have become more and more effective and when I travel to other countries in this region I often hear that they are considered a model. Impunity for high-ranking and powerful is a problem of the past in this country, everybody in this country who is involved in corruption is at risk of getting found out by highly professi-

onal prosecutors, get indicted and convicted. This is highlighted in the most recent report of the European Commission on Progress in Romania under the Co-operation and Verification mechanism which was published this month. But the Commission also made clear that the European Union expects from Romania that the resolution with which the law has been applied to quite a lot of cases must be maintained and extended.

I do, however, consider it encouraging that according to the most recent Eurobarometer which was also published this month by the European Commission in Romania there have been positive changes in respondents' perceptions of corruption in their country. 22 % of respondents thought that the situation regarding corruption had improved compared with five years ago – up from 13 % who said this in May 2012. While this is a positive trend I cannot overlook that 31 % of the respondents thought that the situation had stayed about the same while 43 % believed the situation had got worse.

So there is no doubt that the initiative of Assistant Secretary Nuland and the anti-corruption-strategy developed by the US Embassy in Romania comes at the right time. Let me assure you that if you think the Rule of Law Program South East Europe of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation with its limited means can support you in any way you can count on us.

But as Chargé d'Affaires Dean Thomas rightly said: In democracies, real change comes from average citizens demanding more from their government. And I may add that in this context the young generation in Romania has a special responsibility.

But I have no doubt: If we all work together with passion and determination this country will make substantial, visible and measurable progress.

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I wish the anti-corruption-strategy of the US Embassy every possible success.

May I now invite you to join me in a toast:  
To transatlantic friendship and close cooperation and to success in our joint efforts to effectively fight corruption not only but also in Romania.