

# «UKRAINE-ROMANIA RELATIONS: PERCEPTIONS, PERSPECTIVES, PRIORITIES»

## *First results and preliminary summary of the expert survey*

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Stagnation of bilateral Ukraine-Romania relations caused by such reasons as low awareness, insufficient understanding and rather false perception of the contents, priorities and opportunities of mutual foreign policies was one of the key reasons for the Strategic and Security Studies Group (Ukraine) to initiate the project “UKRAINE-ROMANIA RELATIONS: PERCEPTIONS, PERSPECTIVES, PRIORITIES” together with our partners Association “Resourse” (Romania) and supported by the Black Sea Trust.

Project aim is to provide parties with additional resources to raise the level of trust between political circles and to provide experts with more deep and thorough understanding of the contents, priorities and opportunities for the foreign policies of both Ukraine and Romania, and finally to improve efficiency of co-operation and strengthen fundamental grounds of relations and partnership in general.

For this reason, one of the Project stages includes establishing International Expert Consortium (IEC) which would join supporters of closer co-operation between Ukraine and Romania for conducting complex political research on the various issues of current Ukraine-Romania relations.

The expert survey was started in August 2011 with dissemination of the questionnaire, consisted of 26 questions and socio-demographic section, among more than 120 experts in Romani, Ukraine and other countries. At the moment of presentation, the Project team has received about 20% of filled-in questionnaires while considerable part of them is still expected to arrive. And we still expect more questionnaires to arrive which might change the scope of answers we have at the moment.

However, ever first outcomes allow us to draw few tendencies as perceived by our respondents with regard to Ukraine-Romania relations:

(1) experts tend to consider Romani-Ukraine relations to be improved from February till the current moment, although the half of respondents do not expect any changes, either positive or negative, in the next 3-5 years;

(2) comparing with relations with other neighboring states, Romania-Ukraine relations are perceived as worse than of Ukraine and Russia or Romania and Serbia; however Ukrainian experts tend to underestimate the positive state of relations between Romania and Moldova while Romanian respondents give higher scores to Romania-Hungary relations than their Ukrainian colleagues;

(3) according to experts' opinion, the situation with current relations was mainly caused by such factors as lack of intergovernmental contacts, competition for natural resources in Black Sea basin, along with consequences of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact for the region; in addition, Ukrainian colleagues also emphasize issuing of Romanian passports in Ukraine;

(4) As for the key stakeholders, experts tend to agree that most influential and active groups are local communities of the border regions and international organizations; the group of

governors is perceived as influential but low-active, and in contrary, NGOs and think-tanks are considered to be rather active, but not as influential;

(5) with regard to the youth-youth cooperation, experts tend to believe in the cooperation between think-tanks and youth NGOs, while academic exchanges and research projects are considered as possible, but to lower extent; the most doubtful format of youth-youth joint initiatives is cooperation between youth party wings.

The preliminary results of the expert survey put some light to various aspects of Romania-Ukraine relations, but at the same time they raise up many questions “Why?” – to the experts regarding their answers and to the other stakeholders regarding their vision of possible joint initiatives that might bring positive impact into the bilateral relations at different levels of cooperation. Thus, “SSSG” and “Resourse” Association intent to develop the dialog with experts and between experts in half-structured interviews and during round-table discussions in the nearest future.