

BABEȘ BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EUROPEAN STUDIES

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND EUROPEAN
STUDIES

PhD THESIS

Summary

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Cluj-Napoca

2025

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Transposition and implementation of the Acquis in Romania:
Integration through External relations, Security and Defence
Policy

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TABLE OF CONTENTS OF THE THESIS

INTRODUCTION	1
 CHAPTER I. ROMANIA'S ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION	15
1.1. The Acquis Communautaire: Concept, Origins, and Dimensions	16
1.2. The Obligation to Adopt the Acquis Communautaire	23
1.2.1. Accession Criteria: The Copenhagen Criteria	24
1.3. Concepts Regarding the Legal Acts of the European Union	28
1.4. The Legislative Harmonization Process	34
1.4.1. Implementation of the Acquis in Romania	37
1.4.2. Legislative Transposition into the Domestic Legal Framework	39
 CHAPTER II. THE EUROPEAN UNION'S ENLARGEMENT POLICY	44
2.1. A Brief History of European Integration	44
2.2. European Union Enlargement: From 6 to 27 Members	51
2.2.1. The First Enlargement Wave	58
2.2.2. The Second Enlargement Wave	61
2.2.3. The Third Enlargement Wave	64
2.2.4. The Fourth Enlargement Wave	66
2.2.5. The Fifth Enlargement Wave	68
2.2.6. The Sixth Enlargement Wave	74
2.3. Enlargement Policy Post-2013	78
2.4. Guidelines on the European Union's Enlargement Policy	83
2.5. Perspectives on the Enlargement Process	88
2.6. Conclusions	95
 CHAPTER III. ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION ...	96
3.1. Introductory Concepts	96
3.2. Characteristics of European Negotiations	100
3.3. Elements of Negotiation with Candidate States	102
3.4. The Particular Nature of Negotiations with Each Candidate State	110
3.5. Conclusions	114

CHAPTER IV. ROMANIA'S ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION ... 115

4.1. The Road to the European Union	116
4.1.1. Romania's Post-December 1989 Historical Context	116
4.1.2. The Europeanization Process of Romania	118
4.2. From the Association Agreement to the Signing of the Accession Treaty	123
4.3. Dimensions of Accession Negotiations	132
4.3.1. Accession Negotiations and Their Dimensions	132
4.3.2. Preparation and Initiation of Accession Negotiations	135
4.3.3. Procedural Aspects of Accession Negotiations	136
4.4. Accession Negotiations	140
4.4.1. The Pre-Negotiation Period	140
4.4.2. Evolution of Accession Negotiations (2000-2004)	142
4.4.3. Post-Negotiation Phase	154
4.4.4. Post-Accession Phase	156
4.5. Conclusions and Analysis	158

CHAPTER V. TRANSPOSITION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACQUIS IN THE POLICY FIELD OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND FOREIGN, SECURITY, AND DEFENSE POLICY 160

5.1. Research Design and Methodology	161
5.2. The Semi-Structured Interview	163
5.2.1. Sample	164
5.2.2. Structure and Content of the Interview	165
5.3. Data Processing	168
5.4. Case Study – Transposition and Implementation of the Acquis in the Chapters on External Relations and Foreign, Security, and Defense Policy	169
5.4.1. Chapter 30: External Relations	173
5.4.2. Foreign, Security, and Defense Policy	196
5.5. Data Processing from the Interview Method	228
5.6. Conclusions	236

CHAPTER VI. FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 238

Future Research Directions	244
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BIBLIOGRAPHY	246
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INTRODUCTION

This summary aims to synthesize, in a few clear directions, the doctoral thesis titled “Transposition and Application of the Acquis in Romania: Integration through External Relations, Security, and Defense Policy.” The research aimed to analyze the process of transposing and applying the EU acquis in Romania, with a focus on integration through external relations, security, and defense policy (part of cluster 6, according to the new guidelines regarding accession negotiations), both during the accession period and after Romania became a member state of the European Union. The study explores the legislative, institutional, and political aspects that have influenced the process of alignment with European standards, highlighting the challenges and, at the same time, the opportunities of this process. It seeks to answer highly relevant research questions in the field of International Relations and European Studies.

Romania joined the European Union 18 years ago, on January 1, 2007, following an extremely complex and intricate internal process. Given the post-December 1989 realities in Romania, accession marked a crucial moment in the entire history of our country, and the decision was, in fact, the historic response to return to where we were destined from the beginning: to Western civilization; Romanians being a “people geographically placed by fate at the intersection of the West and East,”¹ and as a nation, a “product of both the West and the Eastern Europe,”² not allowed “to forget that from the West we received our being, our name, and our language...”³. This decision transcends the political and geostrategic character, being the collective desire of citizens to be part of this large community.

From a procedural perspective, the path was extremely dynamic for Romania. Strictly referring to the Romanian space, the accession process involved various political actors, institutions, organizations, the business environment, and civil society. The pro-EU perspectives of Romanian citizens represented a catalyst for those in charge of this process, as public opinion is extremely important when such complex national political projects are in the perspective. These

¹ Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Vocația occidentală a românilor*, în Jurnalul Istoriei și Geografiei PLURAL, Vol. III, nr. 2, Chișinău, 2015, p. 192, disponibil la: <https://plural.upsc.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/16-Ioan-Aurel-Pop.pdf>, accesat la data de 1 octombrie 2023.

² *Ibidem*, p. 201.

³ *Ibidem*.

citizens' perspectives have not faded to this day, as evidenced by polling institutes, which report a higher-than-average trust among citizens regarding the future of the Union.⁴

The changes and reforms initiated by the Romanian side, in terms of aligning with European standards, were numerous and involved reforms in all areas: political, administrative, and judicial. Beneath the clearly visible surface of these efforts, there is also the less visible part – the complicated internal challenges and substantial reforms that shaped the entire process so that, in the end, Romania could successfully join. Without going into details, as negotiations have been addressed in a separate chapter, the period from 1993 to 2007 (from the Association Agreement to accession) was characterized by a concerted effort from actors aiming to obtain the status of a candidate state in the first stage, and then the status of a member state.

In any case, 2004 represented a moment of enthusiasm for the ten states that joined and a good one for Europe (especially Eastern Europe). Thus, for these states and, three years later, for Romania and Bulgaria, their destinies were to change. In 2007, in a speech before the European legislature, the former President of Romania⁵ acknowledged that, in addition to the ability to be solidaristic with the EU, integration would have to also mean, among many other things, the capacity for economic development, creating effective institutions, and building a credible justice system. This speech shows, in fact and in law, the complexity of the European integration process, which begins with accession.

Romania reaffirmed its belonging to the European family through its integration into the European Union, a complex process that involved harmonizing national legislation with the EU acquis. This thesis analyzes the transposition and application of the EU acquis in two essential fields: External Relations and Foreign, Security, and Defense Policy, both part of cluster 6 entitled “External Relations,” highlighting how the Romanian state implemented the EU norms and requirements in these areas and aligned its positions with the EU, particularly after the moment of accession.

Next, the summary will present the general structure of the work, the motivation behind choosing the topic, the methodology used, the main research questions, the contributions to the field of international relations and European studies, as well as a brief synthesis of the conclusions

⁴ Comisia Europeană, Eurobarometru Standard 100, octombrie 2023-noiembrie 2023, publicat în decembrie 2023, disponibil la: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3053>, accesat la data de 16 decembrie 2023.

of the thesis. Additionally, future research directions will be suggested for a deeper understanding of the research topic. In the end, the complete bibliography will be presented (general papers, special papers, articles and specialized studies, and documents).

MOTIVATION FOR CHOOSING THE THESIS SUBJECT

Integration within the Union involves several measures and reforms that need to be implemented constantly at the national level by member states. These measures and reforms penetrate all areas of policy and all spheres of social life, as much of the national policies must be aligned with those of the European Union. Thus, the measures and reforms must be implemented by states (at all levels and in all sectors) to prevent the emergence of disparities that could compromise the optimal functioning of institutions or policies, and to ensure full compliance with the EU's common standards and values.

To provide more credibility and predictability to the accession process, the European Commission submitted, in 2020, a Communication to the relevant structures (the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the Economic and Social Council, the Committee of the Regions) regarding the strengthening of the accession process.⁶ The new approach to the Enlargement Policy introduced changes to the structure of the accession negotiations, without affecting the actual process. The change was introduced with the Revised Enlargement Methodology of 2020, which established a new way of organizing the accession negotiations. Unlike the previous model, including in Romania's case, where chapters were negotiated individually and provisionally closed, the new mechanism proposes a system based on thematic clusters. These clusters group the 33 (or 35) negotiation chapters into coherent groups, ensuring a more integrated approach and greater coherence in the implementation of the reforms necessary for accession. This procedural change – in the perspective of the enlargement process – considered both the current process of accession negotiations and, on the other hand, the much more complex and dynamic internal and external environment of the Union.⁷

⁶ Comisia Europeană, Comunicare către Parlamentul European, Consiliu, Comitetul Economic și Social și Comitetul Regiunilor, „Consolidarea procesului de aderare – O perspectivă credibilă de aderare la UE pentru Balcanii de Vest, COM (2020) 57, Bruxelles, 5 februarie 2020.

⁷ Dragan Tilev, Zoran Nechev, Vladimir Medak, *The European Union New Methodology and its long-term impact on accession negotiations*, mai 2021, disponibil la https://humanityinaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A5_The-

The choice of the research topic on Transposition and Application of the Acquis in Romania, focused on the integration dimension in the fields of External Relations – Chapter 30 – and the Common Security and Defence Policy – Chapter 31 – (grouped in Cluster 6, called "External Relations"), is motivated by several highly relevant elements.

First, given the Union's historical attempts to shape a unified foreign policy – by developing tools that allow it to act internationally through a single voice – the motivation for researching these two chapters, part of external relations, is based on the role they play in ensuring the strategic alignment of states with the objectives and interests of the EU and their integration into it.

Further, in the context of the accession process, the aspects related to aligning states with the values and interests of the Union are carefully observed and evaluated – and thus, this cluster of External Relations has been placed at the center of academic debates regarding gradual integration and enlargement.⁸ Therefore, these two chapters should be, as in the case of those composing the first cluster related to fundamental elements, essential and treated with priority within the process – as they also uphold Union values, such as unity.⁹ Another argument would be the difficult-to-achieve consensus¹⁰ and the difficulties leaders face in acting in mutual interest at the community level, in matters related to foreign policy, security, and defense, as many of the disputed aspects are closely tied to national sovereignty. The enlargement process of the Union is not merely an administrative stage but also a strategic decision, with impact on regional stability and European security. In a tense geopolitical context, marked by conflicts at the borders of the Union, the enlargement policy becomes an essential tool for strengthening the EU and creating a sustainable framework for cooperation. Due to the complexity of the accession process, a change in the methodology used in negotiations was necessary – through the regrouping of chapters into clusters. This method would allow for more efficient integration of reforms by grouping interconnected areas to facilitate simultaneous alignment with European standards. With this approach, the European Union not only simplifies negotiations but also ensures a more coherent and adapted path to the complex realities of each candidate state.

European-Union-New-Methodology-and-its-long-term-impact-on-accession-negotiations.pdf, accesat la data de 08.05.2024.

⁸ Jana Juzova, *Gradual integration process: towards restoring effectiveness and credibility of EU enlargement*, Analysis in EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, 2023, p. 11, disponibil la: <https://europeum.org/data/articles/gradual-integration-process-towards-restoring-effectiveness-and-credibility-of-eu-enlargement-1.pdf>, accesat la data de 4 ianuarie 2024.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

Third, in addition to the "technical exercise" of the process of transposing and applying EU legislation, there is also a "strategic exercise" – challenges regarding transposition and application procedures may be related to legal or institutional complexities, but in the case of these policies, there is also a layer closely tied to the dynamics of international relations. Given that the EU must function as a unified and homogeneous entity on the international stage, the study becomes essential because the policy areas under academic investigation involve processes for adopting or implementing measures that ultimately ensure coherence in the EU's foreign policy. In the 2023 Communication on Enlargement¹¹, the Commission itself emphasized that EU membership is a strategic choice, and with the new complex geopolitical context in mind, alignment with the CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy) represents "a more important signal than ever of the common values and strategic orientation."¹² Moreover, the Union's values must be supported by partners, "firmly and unequivocally."¹³

The two policy areas in Cluster 6 generally consist of binding legislation. During the accession period, from the position of a candidate state, Romania made significant legislative efforts to ensure that national legislation would be compatible with that of the supranational level by the time of accession. From this position, the state had to adopt new laws, modify existing ones to align with EU norms, or repeal national provisions that contradicted EU law. After accession, the process becomes, in a sense, one of continuous compliance. For example, within the Common Foreign, Security, and Defense Policy, transposition ensures that national policies align with those at the supranational level, precisely to maintain a unified approach and avoid unilateral approaches that could jeopardize or undermine joint efforts in the field. For Romania, the transposition and effective application of the *acquis* in this area signify a contribution to joint efforts regarding international economic relations and the security of the Union.

Furthermore, these two policy areas require specific commitments from Romania as a member state. The effective implementation of the *acquis* in these two policy areas ensures that Romania contributes efficiently to strategic objectives – through elements closely linked to trade policy, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, stability, defense, and security. In fact, the Union emphasized the need for candidate states (and not only) to align with the foreign,

¹¹ Comisia Europeană, Comunicarea din 2023 privind politica de extindere a UE către Parlamentul European, Consiliu, Comitetul Economic și Social European și Comitetul Regiunilor, COM (2023) 690, Bruxelles, 2023.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

security, and defense policy in the spirit of mutual loyalty and solidarity.¹⁴ Alignment is viewed as a commitment to the values of the EU and to the coherence of its external policy¹⁵, especially as the EU itself seeks to strengthen its geopolitical influence, given the context of the ongoing conflict at its borders.¹⁶ Therefore, alignment with foreign and security policies is increasingly important – both for candidate states (especially) and for member states. The EU's involvement in the security and stability of the continent requires member states, including Romania, not only to adopt but also to actively promote these policy areas and support them – key aspects in navigating regional conflicts or geopolitical rivalries, with a unified EU position on the external stage.¹⁷

In the process of establishing and grounding Romania's choice as a case study, considerations such as the following were taken into account: relevance in the enlargement process; specificities of the country; and diversity in the context of the EU. Thus, regarding the relevance in the enlargement process, the fact that Romania was among the last countries admitted to the EU presents an advantage for understanding this process, and Romania's experience can serve as a benchmark for candidate states. Another aspect is the country's specificities. The challenges faced by Romania can serve as a case study in understanding and addressing potential obstacles more easily. When referring to the *acquis*, one must also consider, among other things, its evolving nature, meaning its adaptability over time. The deeper we delve into the specifics of this *acquis*, the more we will identify different layers and levels of complexity.¹⁸ These are further compounded by internal factors specific to each country. These considerations also lead to the need for a thorough analysis of this process. Another noteworthy aspect is the diversity within the context of the EU. Romania, like any other member state, has its own characteristics (social, cultural, political), highlighting the deep need to understand the contexts. Understanding is crucial because the process of transposition and application is closely linked to the integration process, which began after Romania's accession.

¹⁴ Barbara Lippert, *EU Enlargement: Geopolitics Meets Integration Policy*, in Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik Comment, no. 1, 2024, p. 4, disponibil la: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2024C01/>, accesat la data de 2 martie 2024.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸ Euractiv, „*La acquis, Romania bate la puncte statele membre UE*”, articol disponibil la <https://www.euractiv.ro/economic/la-acquis-romania-bate-la-puncte-statele-membre-ue-60045>, accesat la data de 10 aprilie 2024.

Further, exploring how Romania respects its commitments as a member state is intertwined with the “pulse” of contemporary legal, political, and social developments in a very complex manner. Currently, the EU has accelerated its development engines in several key policies, urging member states to act promptly and swiftly, in order not to jeopardize unity in external relations. Recent developments, successive crises, are factors that naturally require Romania to adapt accordingly to the realities and approach the “core” of the Union, demonstrating that it is a credible member state capable of ensuring promptness in European affairs and stability in the region.

Since the Union itself has changed considerably, the study will not only be a theoretical exercise, but a reflection of the difficulties Romania faces in the integration process, which began after its accession in 2007. The main goal of this research will focus on examining how Romania has adapted to the two policy areas – External Relations and the Common Foreign, Security, and Defense Policy, both during the accession period and afterward (2007-2024).

STRUCTURE OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS BY CHAPTERS

In the first chapter, several dimensions closely related to the subject matter were addressed to lay the foundation of the thesis. Topics discussed include Romania's accession to the European Union, the concept of the *acquis communautaire*, the accession criteria established in Copenhagen, and the process of legislative harmonization. The European normative framework is analyzed, with a focus on the differences between directives, regulations, and decisions, as well as how they were integrated into national legislation. An essential aspect is the analysis of the stages of transposing European legislation into the Romanian legal framework and the difficulties encountered in this process.

Chapter II addresses the European Union's enlargement policy, analyzing its historical evolution from its inception to the post-2013 enlargement (through the six waves of expansion). These rounds of enlargement are described, each bringing specific challenges and influencing the internal dynamics of the Union. The effects of enlargement on member states and the relations between the EU, on the one hand, and the new members, on the other hand, are also examined. The enlargement policy is placed in the context of geopolitical and economic changes, with an emphasis on the EU's strategies regarding the new members and the future directions of the enlargement process.

In Chapter III, entitled *Accession Negotiations to the European Union*, certain aspects of the accession negotiations in a general sense are addressed, considering the specificities of these negotiations, their characteristics, and the relevant elements at this stage, before accession, with the candidate states (explanatory and bilateral sessions). The fundamental principles of the negotiations are analyzed, as well as the mechanisms through which the EU evaluates the progress made by the candidate countries. Furthermore, the strategies adopted by various countries to meet the accession requirements and the geopolitical influences that shaped the negotiation process are examined. Moreover, the specific nature of the negotiations and the compromises made by the parties during the process are clearly discussed.

Chapter IV, entitled *Romania's Accession Negotiations to the European Union*, focuses on the specific negotiations concerning Romania, starting from the post-December period and the process of Europeanization. The stages from the Association Agreement to the signing of the Accession Treaty are detailed, with an emphasis on the dimensions of the negotiations, the procedures involved, and the post-accession period. The impact of economic and legislative reforms is analyzed, as well as how Romania managed the challenges of the transition to EU membership. In other words, the entire process followed by Romania to gain membership in the Union is presented, from the complex post-December context to the Accession Treaty. The focus was on the key stages of integration and the dimensions of the accession negotiations (specific to Romania), covering all three phases: pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-negotiation. Furthermore, the necessary transformations to align Romania with the Union's requirements, as well as the challenges and achievements in this complex process, are addressed.

Chapter V, entitled *Transposition and Application of the Acquis in the Policy Areas of External Relations and the Common Foreign, Security, and Defence Policy*, addresses the methodological component of the research in the first part, highlighting the main qualitative research methods used (document analysis, semi-structured interviews, case study), along with their descriptions. Subsequently, the processing of the data obtained through the two methods—document analysis and semi-structured interviews—was addressed. In this regard, the interpretation of the previously researched documents was carried out within the context of the case study, and the interpretation of the responses obtained through the interviews followed afterward. The case study on the transposition and application of the *acquis* in the two policy areas (External Relations and the Common Foreign, Security, and Defence Policy), part of cluster 6, was

conducted with the following structure (used for both policy areas): a brief history and developments in the field, the process followed by Romania during the accession period, and the *acquis* in the two policy areas.

Chapter VI presents the final conclusions of the thesis and suggestions for future research, highlighting the main findings and how they answer the two research questions initially formulated. Possible directions for future research are also presented, aimed at deepening the themes analyzed and exploring new perspectives on the subject.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research is to scientifically investigate how Romania transposed and applied the EU *acquis* in the two relevant policy areas, according to the new approaches and orientations of the enlargement policy, cluster 6: External Relations (Chapter 30) and Common Foreign and Security Policy (Chapter 31). Given the complexity of these transposition procedures and the specific legal nuances, a profound methodological approach was necessary, with an inductive research strategy to explore this topic in detail. The selection of a "research logic" in this regard was essential, with the research methods subordinated to the choice of such a strategy to provide coherence to the entire scientific endeavor.

Elements related to the processes of transposing and applying EU legislation in Romania, as part of Romania's efforts to meet the conditions for accession (during the pre-accession period) and those of integration into the Union as a full member state, are not new topics in the field of international relations and European studies. In this context, studying the specialized literature was indispensable for developing the present research work. This review, which involved books, studies, and specialized articles written by professionals, allowed us to extract and include part of the existing knowledge and perspectives related to elements closely tied to the chosen topic and, at the same time, to understand all the nuances regarding the alignment of national policies in the fields of External Relations and Common Foreign, Security, and Defense Policy to those of the Union. In this regard, all works used in this research have been properly cited and are mentioned in the footnotes as well as in the final bibliography, which includes general and specialized works, articles, studies, official documents, and online sources.

The research strategy used in this academic work is qualitative, as it is most appropriate for exploring the procedures and capturing the legislative and institutional complexity and dynamics, as well as the perspectives of the actors and institutions involved in the legislative transposition process. This social science strategy involved and required the use of appropriate research methods, considering the topic under study. Thus, we resorted to the following methods: document and content analysis, semi-structured interviews, and case studies.

Regarding the investigation materials, they are mixed in nature and were consulted in both physical and online formats. As for the types of documents studied, we researched specialized articles and studies, publications, and official documents, relevant opinions found in various blogs, widely circulated newspapers, journals, various audiovisual programs, as well as national and international statistics. Many of the sources consulted were published on the websites of specialized institutions: the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament, the Chamber of Deputies, the European Institute in Romania, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Defense, the Legislative Council, the Ministry of Economy, Eur-Lex.

Among the research documents are: primary and secondary legislative acts (at the EU level), applicable national legislation, Romania's position papers on the two chapters during the accession negotiations addressed in this study, the National Accession Program (2001), Progress Reports from the European Commission on Romania (8 reports, 1998-2005), Ministry of National Defense Reports (17 reports, 2007-2023), reports from the Supreme Council of National Defense (CSAT) on activities conducted (14 reports, 2007-2020), White Papers on Defense (2015, 2017, 2021), multiannual strategic programs for international cooperation and humanitarian assistance (2020-2023 / 2024-2027), national reports on development assistance provided by Romania (2015-2022), National Defense Strategies (2006, 2010, 2015-2019, 2020-2024). On the other hand, we made a request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, given the importance it holds internally in relation to the two policy areas, to obtain some information related to the transposition of the EU acquis concerning Chapter 26 (External Relations) and Chapter 27 (CFSP), now Chapters 30 and 31. The responses received were integrated into the study.

The examination of these documents helped us obtain a clear and comprehensive perspective on how Romania has managed to approach these policies, both during the accession period (as a candidate state) and as an EU member state. Moreover, through these materials, we

were able to reveal the history and evolution of the two chapters, the relevant internal mechanisms, the involved actors (at the supranational and national levels), the composition of the acquis in these two chapters, and Romania's actions and efforts to align with the Union's external relations.

The interview, as a research method used in this study, can be understood as a technique through which verbal information is obtained from individuals or groups, based on a structured process of questions and answers, aimed at verifying hypotheses or scientifically describing various sociological phenomena.¹⁹ In studies of sociological research techniques, Chelcea highlights that the interview is the most commonly used sociological method in research²⁰ and aims to: (i) identify variables and the relationships between them (exploratory purpose), (ii) serve as a central tool for collecting data needed to test hypotheses, and (iii) provide additional information to complement the results obtained by other methods.

Considering the premises and advantages of such a method, the interview designed in this work is semi-structured, conducted with individuals remotely, due to the respondents' intense professional activity and time constraints. It consisted of 10 open-ended questions that explore in-depth the process of transposing and applying EU acquis (in general) and specifically for the two chapters under investigation.

Given the aim of the interview – to obtain a clear image of how the legislative transposition process is perceived by the respondents, to highlight how Romania manages to adapt and implement the EU acquis, as well as the difficulties encountered and possible solutions – the questions were crafted considering the practical and theoretical experience of the interviewees, to obtain responses and information not available through other sources or research methods. Obtaining these interviews was challenging, as requests for participation were sent to several institutions with specific responsibilities related to transposition, including governmental, parliamentary structures, and specialized committees, but many of them did not respond. Ultimately, five interviews were conducted with representatives from institutions responsible for the two analyzed chapters, as well as with experts in the field. Although this number might seem low, the selection was strategic, involving interlocutors with relevant expertise capable of offering valuable insights that contribute to the scientific validation of this research.

¹⁹ Septimiu Chelcea, *Tehnici de cercetare sociologică*, Facultatea de Comunicare și Relații Publice, 2011, p. 122.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 123.

The individuals interviewed for this method were selected based on a sampling that focused on specialists in Romania who have worked or are currently working in state structures related to the legislative transposition process of the *acquis* in the two policy areas. The interviewees are or were affiliated with essential institutions directly involved in the legislative transposition process (with direct responsibilities). In this regard, those interviewed were required to possess specific qualities, such as relevant experience (with direct/indirect involvement in the transposition or integration process) and in-depth knowledge (regarding the *acquis*, European and national legislative processes, and European integration).

I identified the level of experience/expertise as a crucial element for using the interview method in this study, as we would not have been able to obtain insights into how Romania adapts to and implements the EU *acquis* without input from the actors involved (directly/indirectly), whether institutions or experts. Additionally, another aspect was the diversity of perspectives – aiming to include subjects from different state structures or with roles in various stages of the transposition process.

Thus, interview requests were sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to obtain more interviews with experts in the field of transposition and application of EU legislation, considering the Ministry's responsibilities as the 'coordinating institution for the transposition of directives,' and given that one of the chapters studied (External Relations – Chapter 30) falls under the Ministry's jurisdiction, as well as to the Ministry of National Defense, responsible for the integration of the chapter on External Relations, Security, and Defense (Chapter 31), to the parliamentary committees (the Committee for European Affairs and the Committee for Defense, Public Order, and National Security), and to the Legislative Council (the advisory body of Parliament), which plays a key role in ensuring the alignment of national laws with EU standards. The interview was also directed to a high-ranking official with extensive experience in the central apparatus and in close connection with the legislative transposition process and European integration. This selection aimed to offer a multi-angle view of the transposition process, recognizing that responsibility for the process does not belong to a single institution or individual, but involves multiple actors.

Regarding the way the interviews were conducted, they were held online (written) via email, as were the initial participation requests sent to the respondents. This approach was preferred considering its convenience due to the respondents' busy schedules, the efficiency in

collecting answers, the structured nature of the responses, and the clear capture of answers without ambiguity. In any case, we were unable to obtain demographic data from the subjects, as some answers came from an institutional perspective, and others did not provide such information.

In the end, we obtained 5 interviews, each offering valuable insights into Romania's legislative transposition process. Given the multilateral approach (selecting subjects from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Defense, Legislative Council, an expert from the European Affairs Committee of Parliament, and a senior official with extensive executive experience), we were able to obtain more detailed responses that could not have been obtained through other research methods.

In compliance with academic standards, all materials studied and used in this thesis are properly cited in accordance with academic rules, in the footnotes and in the final bibliography. Regarding research ethics, this work was conducted and written in accordance with the Rules of Good Practice in Scientific Research and in accordance with laws concerning copyright, related rights, personal data protection, and other relevant standards.

The research began in 2021 and involved an extensive analysis of official documents, specialized studies, and relevant sources. Between 2021 and 2024, materials published by the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament, the Chamber of Deputies, the European Institute in Romania, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Defense, the Legislative Council, the Ministry of Economy, as well as relevant EU and national legislation, were consulted. Among the documents analyzed are the National Accession Program (2001), the eight Progress Reports from the European Commission (1998-2005), Ministry of National Defense Reports (2007-2023), CSAT Reports (2007-2020), White Papers on Defense (2015, 2017, 2021), Strategic Programs for International Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance (2020-2023, 2024-2027), Reports on Development Assistance (2015-2022), and National Defense Strategies (2006, 2010, 2015-2019, 2020-2024). In addition to document study, five interviews were conducted with experts and representatives from the institutions involved. The process took place between April and September 2024, during which requests were sent to government and parliamentary institutions, and interviews were conducted.

Research Questions

Considering the outlined aspects, the present research presents the following two research questions to be addressed:

- (i) To what extent has Romania, as an EU member state, succeeded in aligning with the two policies, components of cluster 6: External Relations, Common Security and Defence Policy?
- (ii) Does the compatibility between the EU *acquis* on one hand, and the domestic legal system on the other, lead to an increase in the level of integration?

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS WORK TO THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND EUROPEAN STUDIES

Being an interdisciplinary work par excellence – combining, at its core, knowledge and elements from distinct fields of study: international relations, European studies, and legal sciences – the study of the transposition and application of the *acquis* in Romania, from the perspective of the two negotiation chapters – External Relations and Common Security and Defence Policy (Cluster 6) – in the post-accession period, brings a remarkable contribution to the field of International Relations and European Studies by analyzing how these two policies, in particular, are integrated and implemented at the national level in accordance with the Union's strategic objectives in the area of External Relations. This demonstrates, primarily, Romania's commitment to the values and objectives of the EU, and contributes to deepening European integration from the perspective of a member state.

Compliance with EU standards and policy directions, mandatory even after obtaining EU member status, is necessary to maintain a coherent and unified approach among member states, in line with the EU's principles and overall objectives, as well as to preserve the legal framework intact, especially in a geopolitical context marked by turmoil and competition, as highlighted above. Considering the continuity element, in the post-accession period, Romania had to continue the alignment process, strengthening both its administrative and institutional capacity to efficiently implement these policies.

The novelty lies in the detailed and integrated approach (considering procedures, challenges, adopted solutions) of how transposition in Romania is understood in the field of

External Relations. Through the chosen research methods, the study provides a perspective on national-level processes, challenges, and potential solutions, particularly through the responses of interviewees. Given that the issue has been addressed in literature in abstract or formal terms, this study brings an empirical component to the research on these processes. In order to maintain the integrity of the political and legal order within the EU, Romania had to and must continue to adopt EU declarations, common positions, comply with humanitarian aid legislation, development policies, engage in political dialogue within the CFSP, apply sanctions, and implement restrictive measures agreed at the European level to help fulfill the Union's global objectives.

In addition to this "overview" of transposition capacity, the study will also identify possible solutions to optimize these processes at the national level, based on institutional documents and reports, and interview responses. The research will contribute to the development of this field by presenting approaches in the process of "legislative Europeanization"; moreover, by navigating through Romania's entire post-communist development path, given the need (and necessity) for legislative and institutional compatibility, the study offers extremely useful perspectives through responses to research questions, considerations on the transposition process, and its relevance to Romania's integration into the EU, which began after accession.

SUMMARY OF THE CONCLUSIONS RESULTING FROM THE DOCTORAL THESIS

This research aimed to explore the processes of transposition and application of the European Union acquis in Romania in two policy areas, providing an extended perspective beyond purely legal analysis. The qualitative methods used were essential to obtaining a detailed picture of these processes, with the integration of theory and previous research contributing to the clarification of the key concepts addressed.

The central research question was to what extent Romania, as an EU member state, has succeeded in aligning with the two policies, components of Cluster 6: External Relations, Common Security and Defence Policy? Romania has demonstrated efficiency in the field of External Relations, applying the EU's Common Commercial Policy (CCP) since 2007, without adopting national legislation in areas regulated by the CCP. Romania continues to support free trade principles and oppose protectionism, contributing actively to strengthening the Union's capacities

on the global stage. After accession, Romania continued to engage in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, adopting Law 213/2016 and establishing agencies such as ROAid. It has also allocated substantial resources for humanitarian aid and developed international partnerships, aiding developing countries, particularly in Africa and the Balkans.

In the field of security and defense, Romania adopted EU security measures, actively participating in Union initiatives and contributing to peacekeeping operations. It has shown a concrete commitment to European regulations, promoting regional stability and security. After accession, Romania continued to strengthen its profile within the EU, applying the adopted common positions, especially in the field of sanctions.

The interview responses emphasized the evolution of the internalization process of the *acquis* in Romania, from an approach focused on copying texts to a deeper integration of these texts into the Romanian legal system. These developments demonstrate the country's continuous progress in aligning with European standards.

Another objective of the research was to answer the following research question: Does the compatibility between the EU *acquis* on one hand, and the domestic legal system on the other, lead to an increase in the level of integration? The results showed that this compatibility is not only an essential element of European integration but also contributes to more efficient internal governance and Romania's legislative evolution. From the analysis of specialized documents and interview responses, it is evident that when domestic norms are properly aligned with EU *acquis*, the outcomes are favorable for deeper integration. The collected data confirm that effective harmonization between national and European legislation enhances European integration.

This research is investigative in nature, aiming to determine how Romania succeeded in aligning with the two policies and assessing whether compatibility between the EU *acquis* and the Romanian legal system contributes to the increase of European integration. In addition to effective normative convergence, as a result of consistent application of EU *acquis*, the responses indicate that this transposition and application contribute to the consolidation of our European integration. In other words, the transposition of the *acquis* (especially in the two policy areas) is a crucial aspect of Romania's alignment with EU policies, facilitating integration into its structures.

The research has shown that Romania had a significant evolutionary path during the accession and post-accession periods, consolidating its status as an EU member state. Considering the entire context, Romania, both during the accession period and afterward, has demonstrated that

it is an involved and resilient state. The period from 1993 – when the legal framework between Romania and the EU and member states was established – until 2007, was marked by profound changes in multiple areas. Romania had to, in addition to many other measures, bring its national legal framework in line with EU law, which required the adoption of normative acts to transpose EU legislation, or the repeal of contradictory norms. The accession negotiations between 2000 and 2004 tested Romania's administrative, institutional, and judicial capacity, culminating in success – Romania obtained the Accession Treaty, as the chief negotiator remarked. After gaining member status, Romania entered a new stage – integrating into the Union, ensuring constant compliance with EU standards, and strengthening its status as an EU member country.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the importance of correctly transposing the EU acquis and aligning with European policies as fundamental mechanisms for Romania's integration into the European Union. The responses received during the research, combined with the analysis of relevant documents, suggest that Romania has successfully applied the acquis and actively contributed to the strengthening of the European Union, especially in the fields of External Relations and security, demonstrating a solid commitment to EU objectives.

Future Research Directions

Regarding future research directions, I believe the other clusters grouping EU acquis chapters (five remaining: fundamentals, internal market, competitiveness and inclusive growth, green agenda and sustainable connectivity, resources, agriculture, and cohesion) should be researched, given that the central theme of this work was how Romania transposed and applied the acquis concerning the last cluster – External Relations, after 2007. Moreover, the research could address the chapters in which acquis could be clearly quantified from the perspective of legislative transposition processes (for example, where directives – as tools for legislative harmonization – have a higher incidence). This quantification in concrete terms will facilitate the analysis and monitoring of potential progress or trends in the legislative perspective. Therefore, future research could include comparative studies, considering examples from different EU enlargement waves, such as states that joined in distinct waves and from different geographical regions.

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