

Romanians don't want same-sex marriage. What about their politicians?

It's been a while since my last post on efforts to hold a national referendum in Romania to decide the fate of same sex marriage. In 2015 the Irish voted for it, and the results of a national plebiscite, held from September to November in Australia, shows that over 61% of Australians favor legalizing same sex marriage on their continent. What about Romania?

Impressive Survey Results

The Coalition for the Family commissioned a vast opinion poll conducted in the first half of October 2017 which places Romania at odds over gay marriage with Western Europe, North America, and Australia. It's puzzling, however, that, even though the overwhelming majority of Romanians do not want same-marriage legalized in their country and 3 millions of them signed in support of a constitutional amendment to ban it, the constitutionally-mandated referendum on the matter is not yet in sight. What are the main findings of the national poll and what's going on?

According to the survey over 90% of Romanians view marriage as the union between a man and a woman, whose main role is procreation and the rearing and education of children. 91% of the persons who participated in the survey agreed with the phrase: "marriage must be defined as the traditional union between men and women for procreation, the rearing and education of children." Only 6% rejected this definition. An almost equal percentage, over 90%, agreed with the statement "God created man and woman to be together as a family, for procreation, and nobody and nothing can change this norm."

Asked "are you for or against defining marriage as the union of two persons regardless of their sex," 87 % of them answered "No."

When asked: "if you were to vote in a national referendum for or against legalizing marriage between persons of the same sex would you vote in favor or against?" 83% of the respondents said their would vote against legalizing same sex marriage.

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of the respondents stated they are also against legalizing civil partnerships for either opposite sex or same-sex couples.

With respect to gay adoptions, 87% of them stated opposition to the adoption of children by gay couples.

Romanians also gave high marks to the importance of marriage in their society. 80% of the respondents believe that gay marriage impacts negatively procreation and the rearing of children, and 78% that it will have a negative impact on education and the legal system.

Romanians also seemed able to distinguish between same-sex relationships and same-sex marriage. 71% of the respondents stated no one prevents homosexuals from loving one another or having sexual relations, but this, however, does not mandate or justify granting them a right to marry.

Romanians gave high marks to the role of the Church and faith in their society, 87% of the respondents stating that "the promotion of Christian values in Romanian society means observing the traditional values which shaped Romania." 82% of them expressed the view that "the Church has a positive role in the education of children," and 85% that "the Church has a positive role in fostering peaceful relations among individuals." Finally, 83% of Romanians reject teaching sex education in school.

The national survey was conducted by the Center for Urban and Regional Sociology and it involved 1,067 respondents, all over the age of 18. The margin of error is 3% and the degree of trustworthiness of the survey results 95%.

What about the politicians?

Oddly enough, Romania's Social-Democratic Party is the main backer of the constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. It holds over 45% of the seats in the Parliament and right now is the King maker in Romania's politics. Not particularly liked by socialists in the European Union, Romania's socialists are fairly conservative. Their leader has stated on several occasions that, like other countries, Romania will have to face gay marriage head-on, and that he prefers the matter be decided by national referendum not by courts or the European Union. Romania is one of the very few countries in the European Union where the socialists dominate national politics, while theoretically conservative parties dominate politics in most of the European Union. Along with other minor political parties, Romania's socialists have enough votes to pass the gay marriage ban in the Senate, but have not put it to a vote yet. Why?

Oddly enough, the opposition comes from the right, from political parties and groups which claim to be conservative. The National Liberal Party holds 20% of the seats in the Parliament but its President announced in the spring opposition to the gay marriage ban. In the summer a new Party president was elected who claims to support it. Another political group, the Save Romania Union, holding 8% of the seats in the Parliament, has come out officially against the ban. The Union appears to be on its way out, however. It mushroomed into a political party in fall 2016 as an elitist political movement fighting corruption, but now stands at only 5% in the national polls. If it falls below 5% in the 2020 winter elections, it will drop out of the Parliament altogether. Opposition, however, is also mounting from the European Union and the current US Ambassador to Bucharest, an appointee of the Obama Administration.

In the spring, the Chamber of Deputies overwhelmingly passed the constitutional amendment which now awaits passage in the Senate before it can be voted on in a national referendum. In September the socialists revised the referendum laws announcing plans to pass the referendum in the Senate and put it to a vote in late October or early November. In the meanwhile, the liberal - conservatives stalled the process and challenged the proposed modifications in Romania's Constitutional Court.

The bottom line is that, barring unforeseen circumstances, the amendment is expected to be submitted to a vote in the Senate in the spring and to a national referendum around Easter.