

US ambassador: Romania to join Visa Waiver Program in early 2025

The US ambassador in Bucharest, Kathleen Kavalec, said on Monday in Oradea that Romania would join the Visa Waiver Program in early 2025 at the earliest.

It is my goal in this term. It can't be earlier than 2025, because we have to measure the rejection rate annually, from October 1 to October 1. If everything goes well, probably early 2025. We hope. It is not guaranteed. It depends on many things that can happen, but I think we are on the right track, said the US ambassador.

She was in Oradea on Monday to open the traveling exhibition "Noi, Poporul/We the People", which marks the 25th anniversary of the Strategic Partnership between the United States of America and Romania.

The 30 large panels, with 150 photos, made over time, in a quarter of a century, can be able to be admired, for almost a month, in front of the Oradea City Hall.

"The number of visitors to this exhibition will increase exponentially, especially considering that the period also coincides with the Days of Oradea City. Thank you for choosing Oradea to present and celebrate together the strategic partnership between the USA and Romania," said Oradea's mayor Florin Birta.

The presentation of the outdoor exhibition, made by the curator Irina Hasnas Hubbard, was followed the official opening which took place in the large hall of the Oradea City Hall, with short speeches by the guests: the US ambassador to Romania, Kathleen Kavalec, the secretary of state in the Ministry of Culture, Cristian Lazar, the mayor of Oradea, Florin Birta, the prefect of Bihor County, Dumitru Tiplea and the director general of AGERPRES, Claudia Nicolae.

"I could not be more proud of this exhibition and the friendship, partnership, and progress it represents. Nor could I be more pleased to share it with you all. As I mentioned, 'We the People' celebrates over 25 years of the U.S.-Romania Strategic Partnership and the journey we have made together in that time. The title of the exhibition, 'We the People,' comes from the preamble of the U.S. Constitution. We use it in celebration of the human element that makes everything we have accomplished possible. It is fitting because the foundation for all that we have accomplished on our journey together is the people-to-people relationships between Americans and Romanians. Our journey of shared progress belongs to both our nations and to each of us individually," said the US ambassador.

According to her, the photos and text in the exhibit tell the story of a friendship and a partnership that started with then-President Clinton's announcement of the strategic partnership and goes through over two decades of shared progress.

"Back in 1997, after remarking on how Romanians had 'won the world's respect for moving so far, so fast, and for believing in yourselves and your future,' then-President Clinton encouraged Romania to 'Stay the course, the future is yours.' President Clinton saw the potential in Romania and in the Romanian people and the importance of an unbreakable U.S.-Romania partnership. Since then, Romania has made commendable progress in democratic reform and economic growth. Romania is an exemplary NATO Ally both contributing troops to multinational operations abroad and hosting NATO troops here in Romania. Romania has also stood steadfast in support of our partners and neighbors in Ukraine as they defend their country against Putin's unprovoked and brutal invasion. Romania continues proving itself to the world in realizing its potential and delivering on its commitments," Kathleen Kavalec pointed out.

Undersecretary of state Cristian Lazar conveyed the message and the greeting of minister Raluca Turcan,

affirming that beyond the diplomatic, security, economic and strategic aspects, cultural relations are and were also important, because "any rapprochement between peoples is done mainly through culture."

The director general of the AGERPRES National News Agency, Claudia Nicolae, wanted to thank the organizers for including the mass media in this project.

"All this living history which, until the end, forms the collective memory, not only of a people, but also of a nation, this living memory can also be achieved with the help of the media. And especially through photography. It is the only history that is untouched. Untouched by words, untouched by misinformation, untouched by interpretation. This is how you will find the images in AGERPRES, in an archive of 4 and a half million photos. It is an archive that presents step by step the history of Romania, the bilateral relations of this country, including the 25 years of strategic partnership. This is what a strategic partnership means: bringing all components to the same table: administration, diplomacy, but also the press. Because the press carries forward any achievement," said Claudia Nicolae.

Oradea is the eighth city in which this retrospective anniversary exhibition was presented, and it is carried out by the US Embassy, in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania - Diplomatic Archives Unit, with the National News Agency AGERPRES and in collaboration with the University of Craiova.