

---

## **FURY AT EU'S WORST HIGHWAYS FUELS NEW KIND OF PROTEST IN ROMANIA**

-

15.03.2019

---

Bloomberg (15 March 2019)

Sick of driving on the European Unions worst roads, one Romanian businessman has found a new way to vent his anger.

Stefan Mandachi, a restaurateur in northeastern town of Suceava, wants people across the Black Sea nation to stop what theyre doing for 15 minutes at 3 p.m. on March 15 as a signal to the government that frustration is widespread.

In an act of defiance this month that made him famous, he spent 4,500 euros (\$5,100) to build a symbolic single meter of highway in his home county. The online video has more than 1 million views. A host of local companies plan to join, as well as Danish home-furnishings firm JYSK. Even some ruling-party mayors say theyll participate.

If youre a teacher, extend the students break by 15 minutes; if youre a builder, stop working for 15 minutes; if youre a driver, stop the car for 15 minutes and if youve decided to emigrate from Romania, please stick around for 15 more minutes, Mandachi said in a Facebook post.

Demonstrations have become common in recent years as Romanians challenge government efforts to reduce punishments for corruption. But while officials backtracked when about half a million people turned out in 2017, theyve since proceeded with their plans more incrementally, causing protest numbers to fizzle out.

Romanias infrastructure has ranked as the EUs worst since it joined the bloc alongside Bulgaria in 2007, with citizens attributing the lack of progress to corruption, where the country also scores poorly. The country has about 800 kilometers (500 miles) of highways. Only 60km of new construction took place in 2018 after 15km in 2017, according to the national company for road-infrastructure administration.

Its not that extreme to have to protest for highways if its at the root of peoples biggest problem, but its hard to tell whether this will have an impact or not, said Steven Van Groningen, the head of Raiffeisen Bank Romania SA. One thing is certain: if we dont do something, nothing will happen.

Van Groningen, who attended anti-government demonstrations in 2017, declined to say whether hed join the 15-minute protest.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-15/fury-at-eu-s-worst-highways-fuels-new-kind-of-protest-in-romania>

---

Kaynak/Source: