

# **Adoptions Are Put on Hold In Romania**

*Friday, June 22, 2001*

## **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

BUCHAREST, Romania -- Romania suspended international adoptions Thursday, following criticism by a European Union official that it is "selling" its children.

The decision, which doesn't affect about 5,000 cases in progress, was made by the National Committee for Adoptions, which regulates national and international adoptions.

Emma Nicholson, the European Parliament's special envoy for Romania, criticized the country in a draft report published earlier this month, for "persistent abandonment of children, child abuse and neglect, international adoption and child trafficking."

The European Union has insisted that Romania improve its treatment of orphans before it can join the bloc, something Bucharest hopes to do by 2007.

Charities and the government harshly criticized the report for overlooking the progress achieved in caring for Romania's 60,000 abandoned children. In recent years, the government started local foster care programs, placing thousands of children with families to reduce the number in state-run institutions.

But a government press officer said the adoptions will be suspended until a new law can be enacted that satisfies European Union criteria, including making the process and fees more transparent.

Local child-care officials are reported to have taken bribes of up to \$10,000 to make children available for adoptions, a U.S. official said.