

Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ

Vice-President of the European Commission

Responsible for Interinstitutional Relations and Administration

**Conclusion statement at EP plenary
debate on the review of Hungarian
presidency**

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Plenary session in the European Parliament

Strasbourg, 5 July 2011

Mr President, the debate we have just had clearly demonstrated how important European integration is today, and how important a role the rotating Presidency still plays.

The motto of the Hungarian Presidency was 'strong Europe'. We do indeed need a strong Europe. I think that many of the achievements which have already been enumerated here strengthen our Union – economic governance, the first-ever European Semester, financial services oversight, better protection of consumers, the Roma and Danube strategies and the conclusion of the accession negotiations with Croatia, just to mention a few.

As we should not be distracted from these achievements and from the purpose of today's political debate, let me also respond to the various comments made by honourable Members on the Hungarian constitution and the Commission position on this issue. This is a serious matter and one which requires careful analysis before any conclusions are drawn.

The new constitution will enter into force on 1 January 2012 and will require the adoption of implementing measures. The assessment at this stage is that the Hungarian constitution does not create issues of compatibility with Union law. Its legal effects will be fully evaluated when the implementing legislative, administrative and judicial procedures are in place. The Commission is following very closely the work of the Venice Commission, which issued its comprehensive opinion on this issue on 20 June, following a request from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. We are currently analysing this opinion. Against this backdrop, I assure you that the Commission takes its work as guardian of Union law very seriously and will remain vigilant vis-à-vis Hungary, and indeed any other Member State, and will not hesitate to make use of its prerogatives if necessary.

Let us now turn to what made this Presidency such a turning-point, the decisive steps made in terms of strengthening our economic governance and our common economic policy through the European Semester. As several speakers highlighted, the current crisis brought home very clearly the message that our economies are interconnected, our future is linked together and

the EU is a shared economic space, not 27 separate economies. The crisis showed what kind of effects we may feel if one country is not performing well. This formed the basis of the EU 2020 strategy and our first European Semester.

I have to thank the Hungarian Presidency for the successful European Semester and the successful discussion on the country-specific recommendations, which have also been endorsed by the European Council. This created the best possible conditions for the transition from the European Semester to the national semesters. We know that the reforms will be successful only if they are owned by the national governments and implemented on the ground.

I should like to make just one comment on the economic governance package. I think that both Council and Parliament have made tremendous progress. We are very close to the successful conclusion of this very important governance package. It would, of course, be highly appreciated if we could go the extra mile required and conclude the very important negotiations on this package as soon as possible. A sincere word of thanks goes to

the Hungarian Presidency, who really put a lot of energy and negotiating effort into bringing this package so close to fruition.

For the Hungarian Presidency, the priority from day one has been to conclude the accession negotiations with Croatia. This was a great success which sends a very important signal, not only to the Croats but to all the peoples in the Western Balkans, because we have reconfirmed that their future lies within the European Union. We have also reconfirmed that enlargement is a credible process from the point view of both sides, both in terms of preparations and of the European Union's commitment towards the Western Balkan nations.

The Hungarian Presidency was instrumental in helping to shape new policy in our neighbourhood, where we support 'deep' and real democracy and where we are ready to support reforms which consolidate this positive development in these regions.

Allow me to conclude with two very important strategies. The first is the Danube Strategy where, I believe, we will replicate the success of the first macroeconomic strategy the Commission unveiled, the strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. I believe that,

through common cooperation and the expertise offered by the Commission, we can really help this region achieve new economic successes and new economic prosperity.

I think the important work on the Roma strategy was very well received. We clearly demonstrated that the Roma issue is a European one, and that we need to seek a solution at European level. This is an issue which must be tackled by all institutions and by all Member States. Therefore the interconnection of policies at European level and national concrete action plans are very important and, I believe, will bring positive results for the Roma minority.

Allow me to thank, also, the partners with whom I have been working almost on a daily basis, Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi and State Secretary Enikó Győri. They, out of the whole Hungarian Presidency team, probably spent the most time in the Parliament. I think they did a great job and I would like to thank them very much for their cooperation.