



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, - 4 DEC. 2009
C/2009/ 9812

Dear President,

The European Commission thanks the Italian Chamber of Deputies for their favourable opinion and their valuable remarks on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and to the Council "Eastern Partnership" {COM(2008)823}.

With reference to the observations of the Chamber, the European Commission has the honour to inform the Chamber about the following:

A first meeting of an Eastern Partnership (EaP) Civil Society Forum is scheduled for 16-17 November 2009 in Brussels. The aim is to promote contacts between civil society organisations and to facilitate their dialogue with public authorities.

The Commission is preparing the launch of a Flagship Initiative "SME Facility" in the end of 2009. The development of SMEs in partner countries is hampered by issues of business climate (including inadequate legal/policy framework), the lack of advisory services and difficult access to funding sources. The Flagship Initiative will identify key issues for effective enterprise policies and the promotion of a conducive business climate.

The European Union needs to be able to show solidarity and offer our partners more in key areas such as the (legitimate) mobility of persons. The Commission believes in a very strong functional link between greater mobility and greater security. The two must go hand in hand.

The EaP is a framework for the Eastern European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries. Russia has opted for developing its relationship outside the ENP. The EaP is developed in parallel to the Strategic Partnership between EU and the Russian Federation.

Mr Gianfranco FINI
President of the Chamber of Deputies
Italy

The additional resources that would be made available for the EaP would not mean that anything is "taken away" from our Southern neighbours (the resources for which remain much larger in nominal terms). At the same time as we implement the Eastern Partnership we will continue to intensify relations with our neighbours to the South, based on their commitment to reform. The net result will see the allocation for the South rising over the period 2010-2013 as planned, and well ahead of the East in global terms.

The EaP will aim to strengthen the energy security of the EU and of the partners with regard to long-term energy supply and transit. The partnership will try to implement mutual energy support and security mechanisms, including early warning mechanisms and joint security actions. One of the objectives will be to enhance energy crisis preparedness. Energy efficiency and renewable energy were also identified as priority areas.

I hope you will find this a valuable contribution to your own deliberations and I look forward to continuing this fruitful exchange of information,

Yours sincerely,

Margot WALLSTRÖM
Vice-President of the European Commission