

PARLIAMENT OF ROMANIA

CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

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6 March 2013

## **OPINION**

### **Concerning the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013 COM(2012)600**

Having regard to the Treaty of Lisbon, in particular Articles 5 and 12 TEU and Protocols 1 and 2 annexed to the Treaty,

Having regard to the Constitution of Romania, republished, in particular Article 148 thereof,

Having regard to Decision No 11/2011 of the Chamber of Deputies,

Taking into account the draft opinion presented by the Committee for Foreign Affairs at its meeting of 19 February 2013,

Taking into account the final draft opinion presented by the Committee for European Affairs at its meeting of 26 February 2013,

Having regard to the approval given by the Permanent Office of the Chamber of Deputies on 4 March 2013,

The Chamber of Deputies, acting in accordance with Article 40 of its Decision No 11/2011 of 27 April 2011, hereby adopts this Opinion:

Following its analysis of the Communication, the Romanian Parliament would like to raise the following issues, which it believes ought to be taken into consideration:

- EU enlargement should be seen as more than a process of economic and political integration: it is a process that needs to represent something tangible to each European citizen. From this point of view, a Union with more Member States than at present should be ready not only to ensure freedom of expression (as referred to in the Communication), but also to lay the foundations for a system under which European citizens can obtain information and give feedback when exercising their right to free expression.

- Of course, the fight against corruption is a premise for the proper functioning of the rule of law and this is quite rightly pointed out in the Communication. However, we are now seeing new methods and forms of anti-social behaviour as the economy evolves in response to technical progress. One of the most dangerous phenomena in this field is State capture. The new Member States (and not only them) need support in the fight against new forms of fraud, which go beyond the classic framework of corruption. In general terms, corruption consists of a situation where the law is broken and the justice system steps in to take action against it. However, state capture is much more insidious,

as it involves the drawing up of laws, rules and other types of government acts that provide personal benefits for persons in public office, by means of non-transparent mechanisms and illicit methods. In this case, the political system has the right to take action and indeed should do so.

- An enlarged union means in practice the expansion of the integrated area up to its limits, and this requires assuming and affirming a global interest rather than a regional interest. This does not mean that the Union in its current form is not a global player, but simply that continental enlargement requires a corresponding expansion in the scope of the EU interest. Although the state-by-state approach has certain administrative advantages, the analysis should perhaps be supplemented by identifying regional interests that could help to shape a global vision. Possible points of interest could include: potential for inter-state cooperation for a continental transport network, with particular emphasis on rail and water transport, negotiating capacity, ensuring inter-parliamentary cooperation and other similar matters.

- The administrative capacity of candidate countries is perhaps one of the most difficult aspects to deal with in preparing accession. It is clear that administrative capacity does not increase of its own accord the day after the accession treaty is signed. It is equally clear, at least in Romania's experience, that unlike the pre-accession instruments, sectoral operational programmes start from the premise that the Member State has sufficient administrative capacity, with technical assistance being provided more on a case-by-case, thematic basis. Whether or not new Member States have the administrative capacity to utilise the new instruments (i.e. the sectoral operational programmes) and at the same time to make up for certain internal deficiencies remains a major problem. Leaving it up to the new Member to determine whether or not they have such capacity is a risky approach.

- We believe that in order to stimulate and accelerate political and economic reforms in countries with a clear European perspective, it is very important that the credibility of enlargement policy and the European Commission's commitment to enlargement are maintained. At the same time, there must be compliance with the principle that enlargement depends on each country's own merits and whether or not it fulfils the conditions for accession.

- As regards the consolidation of the EU's role as a global player, we support the strategy that reconfirms the European perspective of the Western Balkans, Turkey and Iceland. We would also point out the mutual benefits of enlargement, both for candidate countries and for the Union.

- Romania continues to support making enlargement available to all states that are determined to and able to meet the accession criteria. Meeting all the accession criteria is the key factor that determines the speed at which each candidate country advances in this process.

We understand that a communication of this kind cannot by its nature deal with every aspect of a field as complex as EU enlargement. At the same time we appreciate the manner in which the Communication has summarised and structured the information presented. We believe that the aspects we have highlighted have a place in subsequent documents and debates. The Parliament therefore recommends that the Commission include these points on the agenda of future meetings on this subject.

This opinion is addressed to the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission and to the Romanian Government.

**PRESIDENT**

Valeriu Stefan Zgonea