

Parliament of Romania

Chamber of Deputies

No 1/2262/VZ

25 June 2013

OPINION

on the Communication: Preparing for the 2014 European elections: further enhancing their democratic and efficient conduct

COM (2013) 126

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, as republished, in particular Article 148 thereof,

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

Having regard to the draft opinion of the Legal Affairs Committee, drawn up following discussion of the document in question at the meeting of 25 April 2013,

Having regard to the point of view of the Permanent Electoral Authority,

Having regard to the comments presented by the Head of the European Commission Delegation in Bucharest concerning the Commission's package of proposals for the 2014 European Parliament elections,

Having regard to the information sheet drawn up by the EU Law Directorate of the Chamber of Deputies,

Having regard to the point of view of the Government of Romania, expressed in the letter from the Ministry of European Affairs,

Having regard to the final draft opinion adopted by the Committee for European Affairs at its meeting of 12 June 2013,

Having regard to the approval given by the Permanent Bureau of the Chamber of Deputies on 17 June 2013,

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

The Chamber of Deputies welcomes the proposal for the reasons set out below

1. it is in line with the European Commission's efforts to fulfil its commitment to fully exploit existing Lisbon provisions to further enhance transparency and the European dimension of the European elections, thereby reinforcing the democratic legitimacy of the EU decision-making process and bringing the system closer to Union citizens;
2. with a political union as a horizon, the proposal gives expression to the Commission's commitment to take concrete steps towards developing a European public space as well as to put forward further ideas on how to make the European Union more open and democratic in time for a debate before the European elections in 2014;
3. the overall turnout for European Parliament elections has fallen from 63% in 1979 to 43% in 2009, forcing Parliament, the Council and the Commission to take action to promote public participation in the democratic process in the Union;
4. the proposal makes a number of practical recommendations, which represents progress in terms of the link between citizens, the exercise of their political rights and the democratic life of the Union. These recommendations will stimulate debate on European topics and create and foster a European public space, so that Europe and European issues are in the centre of national debates throughout the EU, thereby providing a platform for the future stages of European integration;

In the view of the Chamber of Deputies:

1. the European Parliament's electoral procedure must be durable and comprehensible, must promote intra-party democracy, and must uphold the practice of free, fair and secret elections resulting in overall proportionality of representation;
2. reform of the electoral procedure must also respect the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and should not seek to impose uniformity for its own sake;
3. the connection between political processes at national and EU level needs to be better communicated. This is essential to make the links between the main actors involved more visible to citizens, because the analysis of previous European elections has highlighted the dominance of national topics that overshadow issues of EU relevance and negatively affect voter turnout, as well as the disconnect between political parties at national level and European political parties and in this [translator's note: text missing in original] 'contribute to forming European political awareness and to expressing the will of citizens of the Union'.
4. it is necessary to clearly indicate the affiliation of national political parties and their candidates in European elections to pan-European political parties, in order to underline the link between pan-European parties and national parties. This should be made public ahead of the elections;
5. it would be in the interest of electors for each European political party to nominate a candidate for President of the European Commission. The candidate would then present the party's political programme to the citizens of different Member States;

6. as regards the recommendation that Member States agree on a single day for holding the European Parliament elections, with polling stations closing at the same time, discussions have been launched between the relevant political actors, so that the greatest possible attention is given to the issue;

7. particular attention should be given to eliminating obstacles to EU citizens' voting rights and respect for the EU's common principles (exercise of the right to vote and to stand as candidates for the European Parliament). The Chamber of Deputies supports all measures taken in this respect.

8. Directive 93/109/EC requires amendment in order to strengthen the participation of non-national EU citizens as candidates in European elections, as EU citizens who want to stand as candidates in European elections in a Member State to which they have moved face costly and burdensome administrative procedures.

The Chamber of Deputies would also point out the following in connection with the situation in Romania:

1. there is a single contact authority - *Autoritatea Electorală Permanentă* (AEP) [the Permanent Electoral Authority], which is the sole institution with responsibility for transposing the provisions on European Parliament elections into national law. The AEP was established as an administrative body for the management of the electoral process, whose powers are limited to technical aspects and electoral education, aimed at promoting a political culture of participation and a lucid and well-informed involvement of citizens;

2. the national legislative framework is sufficiently comprehensive in order to inform electors on the links of affiliation between national and European political parties;

3. the AEP is currently preparing a draft law to amend Law No 33/2007 on the organisation and holding of European Parliament elections, which is intended to transpose Council Directive 2013/1/EU of 20 December 2012 amending Directive 93/109/EC as regards certain detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament for citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals. The draft law will be forwarded to Parliament for debate;

4. with regard to setting a single day on which to hold European Parliament elections, the AEP has found that Sunday would be considered to be an appropriate day, provided that the relevant political actors come out in favour of this recommendation.

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

PRESIDENT

Valeriu Ștefan Zgonea