



PARLIAMENT OF ROMANIA

CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

DECISION

**approving the Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the
European Parliament and the Council – Enlargement Strategy and Main
Challenges 2013-2014
COM (2013) 700**

Pursuant to Article 67 and Article 148 of the Romanian Constitution, republished, Law No 373/2013 on the cooperation between the Parliament and the Government in European Affairs, and Article 40 of the Decision of the Chamber of Deputies No 11/2011 on the work procedure and decision-making mechanism for the parliamentary control of the draft legislative acts of the European Union in accordance with the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty relating to the role of the national parliaments,

the Chamber of Deputies has adopted this **Decision**:

Sole Article – Taking into account Draft Opinion No 4c-19/93 adopted by the European Affairs Committee at its meeting of 26 February 2014,

1. The Chamber of Deputies compliments the EU institutions and Member States supporting the enlargement policy for their position and contributions towards strengthening this process.
2. The Chamber of Deputies appreciates that the Enlargement Strategy adopted confirms the continued validity of the fundamental criteria for accession agreed upon in Copenhagen 20 years ago, along with economic governance, competitiveness, consolidation of democratic institutions, compliance with the principles of the freedom of expression and the rights of minorities, including the Roma, the protection of other vulnerable groups against discrimination, good neighbourly relations, regional cooperation and the settlement of bilateral disputes.
3. The Chamber of Deputies stresses that Romania has been and remains an active supporter of EU Enlargement and regards it as one of the most successful EU policies. The European perspective for the countries involved in the process of drawing closer to the European Union has already helped in their democratic transformation, institutional modernisation and extensive economic reforms.
4. The Chamber of Deputies considers that the progress towards accession depends on the measures taken by each country to meet the criteria established on the basis of merit; it supports the need that the countries involved in the enlargement process continue implementing ambitious reforms; it appreciates that these elements can ensure the credibility of the enlargement policy, insofar as “*credibility*” means an increase in the quality of the whole process and not a euphemism for closing access to the Union; at the same time the Chamber of Deputies believes that the offering of an accession perspective should not be used in political speeches as a simple incentive but it should meet the provisions of the EU Treaties and reflect the achievements and responsible attitude of the candidate states.
5. The Chamber of Deputies is in favour of the adaptation of the method and mechanisms of enlargement policy, the development of the Union and its policies, as currently the accession process is more rigorous and comprehensive, gives priority to the fundamental elements, introduces at the very beginning of the negotiations areas such as judicial reform and the fight against organised crime and corruption, which proved to be the most difficult to fulfil, and puts the rule of law in the centre of the accession process as the key pillar of the Copenhagen political criteria. At the same time the Chamber of Deputies notes that these adjustments must not induce the perception of tightening the conditions of accession arising from the lack of appetite of some Member States towards enlargement.
6. The Chamber of Deputies recognises the importance of offering a European perspective both for the Western Balkan countries and for other neighbouring

countries of the Union also engaged in the process of drawing closer to the European Union and which are posting notable performances in their efforts to align with EU standards.

From the perspective of the particular difficulties that have been in the way of finalising the negotiations of the Association Agreements of the Eastern Partnership countries, the Chamber of Deputies stresses the merits of the Republic of Moldova and of Georgia, and urges the European institutions to take the necessary steps to sign the agreements and to facilitate the access of the two countries to the highest levels of integration.

7. The Chamber of Deputies notes the progress of the candidate countries, as highlighted in the 2013 country reports for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.
8. The Chamber of Deputies considers that 2013 was also important for the European course of Serbia, on account of the European Council Decision in June on opening the accession negotiations, and the entry into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. The Chamber of Deputies stresses the constant support given by Romania to the European course of its neighbour, and draws attention to the need for consistent implementation of the measures concerning the protection of minorities.
9. The Chamber of Deputies compliments all actors of the historic agreement between Serbia and Kosovo on 19 April 2013, and considers that this agreement demonstrates that complicated and serious conflicts can be solved if there is a political will, and that European integration has retained its attractiveness; it regrets that not all states in the area have taken advantage of this success to resolve their differences.
It welcomes the European Council Decision to start the accession negotiations with Serbia, and the authorisation by the Council of the Union to open negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and Kosovo.
10. The Chamber of Deputies invites Serbia to manifest the same vision and responsibility in combating discrimination and the protection of national minorities.
11. The Chamber of Deputies supports Romania's international policy option in the sense of complying with the principle of status neutrality regarding Kosovo, and considers that the EU Association Agreement with Kosovo should be exclusively of Community competence.
12. The Chamber of Deputies welcomes the launch in 2014 of the second Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II), which introduces several major innovations, particularly the priority granted to defining policies and long-term strategies in a

limited number of priority sectors tailored to the needs and capacities of each country.

13. The Chamber of Deputies regrets the emergence and persistence of positions contesting the enlargement process, put forward by certain political groups and sometimes even by the national governments and parliaments in some Member States. The Chamber of Deputies expresses its concern that “*enlargement fatigue*” also indicates the reduction of the availability of some Member States to contribute to the construction of Europe, but is convinced that this is a temporary situation generated by the economic and social imbalances caused by the economic crisis, and implicitly by the reduction of the Union's capacity to assume certain responsibilities and costs.

It expresses its satisfaction that there are no anti-European or Eurosceptic movements in Romania, and notes that there is a direct proportional relation between the statistical confidence of the population in the European Union and the national authorities' support for enlargement.

14. The Chamber of Deputies considers that the innovations introduced by the 2013 Enlargement Package may lead to an improvement in the quality of the enlargement process, in particular:

- the concrete support granted to the countries involved in the enlargement process, through the European Commission's preparation of a set of general measures for each of the identified challenges;
- a greater focus on the fundamental rights and implicitly, supplementing the Union's actions by additional measures to ensure the freedom of expression of the citizens and the media, and to ensure the rights of sexual minorities and the Roma minority;
- a greater emphasis and more detailed language to overcome bilateral disputes not only between the countries involved in the enlargement process, but also between those countries and the Member States.

15. The Chamber of Deputies would stress that in Romania, as in other Member States, considerable efforts to integrate the Roma population have been made but the national strategies alone are not sufficient to successfully solve their problems.

16. The Chamber of Deputies shall propose to the European Commission that the conference on the Roma minority due to be held in 2014 in Brussels should include on its agenda an innovative strategy based on the recognition of the Roma ethnicity as European ethnicity, in order to promote a set of principles that would form the basis for the elaboration of a single European project dedicated to this

minority, and not just a framework for the national Roma integration strategies as it is today.

17. The Chamber of Deputies considers that the efforts to overcome bilateral differences are insufficient, and notes that despite its peacekeeper status the European Union has underestimated the seriousness and the sources of bilateral disputes, and the risks for the enlargement process; this approach is perpetuated in the analysed document in that it does not provide for the formalisation of the commitments of the states to resolve bilateral disputes as a rule of the enlargement process; the simple statement of the need to resolve bilateral disputes, the recommendation to seek consensus and the argument that EU standards assume good relations between the Member States do not seem to be having an effect.
18. The Chamber of Deputies indicates that the mix of weak leadership, lack of experience in conflict resolution and low appetite for compromise makes bilateral differences affect the accession process and the fairness of the principle of conditionality.
19. The Chamber of Deputies recalls that the bilateral disputes between the states of the Western Balkans are now fuelled by issues of border demarcation, property rights, displaced persons and refugees, the rights of ethnic minorities and non-recognition of the existence of ethnic minorities in other countries, non-recognition among the Orthodox churches, the problems of identity and status, and conflicting interpretations of history.
20. The Chamber of Deputies notes that the ethno-nationalist rhetoric continues to maintain its influence in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, leaving little room for rational arguments; as a result, the basic democratic values are seriously undermined, political discourse is polarised along ethnic lines, and society remains deeply divided.
21. The Chamber of Deputies considers that the explanation for the failure to settle the bilateral dispute between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the topic of the country's constitutional name, even though this is an essential requirement for advancing the Euro-Atlantic course of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, lies in the combination of the elements indicated above.
It notes that the UN mediation process on the issue of the name, which opposes Macedonia and Greece, is entering its 18th year, and the chances of settlement seem more distant than ever.

It hopes that the prestige of the Presidency of the EU Council for six months will make Greece more actively involved in the negotiations with the neighbouring country.

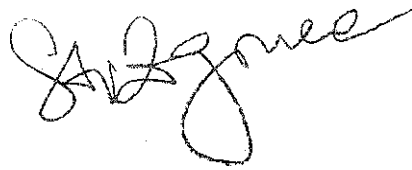
22. The Chamber of Deputies appreciates the importance granted by the European Commission to further strengthening regional cooperation; the Chamber of Deputies supports the involvement of the South-East European Cooperation Process, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe owing to the expertise of these organisations in the Western Balkans and the states neighbouring the European Union; it welcomes the appointment of the High Representative for the Balkans of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and believes that mechanisms should be established for a more systematic and targeted cooperation with the international organisations that share the European Union's objectives, the achievement of which may contribute to the success of enlargement policy.

This Decision was adopted by the Chamber of Deputies in the meeting of 11 March 2014, in compliance with Article 76 (2) of the Constitution of Romania, republished.

**PRESIDENT
OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES**

Valeriu Ștefan Zgonea

**Bucharest, 11 March 2014
No 7**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Ștefan Zgonea', written in a cursive style.