

**PARLIAMENT OF ROMANIA  
CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES  
DECISION**

**approving the Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'EU Enlargement Strategy' (COM (2015) 611)**

Pursuant to Articles 67 and 148 of the Romanian Constitution, republished, Law No 373/2013 on cooperation between Parliament and the Government in the area of European affairs, and Rules 160 to 185 of the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies, approved by Decision No 8/1994 of the Chamber of Deputies, republished,

the **Chamber of Deputies** hereby adopts this Decision.

**Sole Article.**

Having regard to Opinion No 4 c-19/360, adopted by the Committee for European Affairs at its meeting of 31 March 2016, the Chamber of Deputies:

1. notes that, despite the successes of previous enlargement rounds and the notion that it is one of the EU's most successful policies, enlargement policy has been suffering from a credibility crisis for several years now;
2. notes that the Commission President's inaugural statement that no new enlargement was in sight during this Commission's term of office no longer seems so critical in light of the spate of crises that are currently playing out with acute overtones: the migrant crisis, which is rightly seen as an existential threat to the very foundations of the EU; the rise of terrorism and radicalisation, which has created confusion and uncertainty in Member States that are highly developed economically and socially; the emergence of populist, nationalist and anti-European parties in the political arena of Member States with consolidated democracies; the 'repatriation of powers', which has been undermining drivers of EU enlargement and political integration; and the euro crisis, which has affected what was long held up as yet another renowned success of enhanced cooperation;
3. recalls that, in the opinions it has issued and the views it has expressed in recent years in the European arena, it has maintained that the so-called 'enlargement fatigue' is a term that arose out of national political considerations that are inconsistent with the commitments made by the Member States in question at the EU level;
4. notes that until a solution is found to the most serious threat of all, i.e. the alarming increase in migrant flows, the expected positive developments related to enlargement could suffer long- and medium-term delays; underlines that this must not result in efforts being abandoned, but rather in the revitalisation of the entire process;
5. points out that there has recently been a perception that enlargement policy is on 'autopilot' and that, in the absence of any substantial necessary change, it seems as if the EU simulates reform while countries aspiring to membership pretend to be reformed just to be able to tick the right boxes and advance in the accession process;

6. takes the view that the strategy presented by the European Commission does not fully respond to the need to adapt to the current climate, and that the required sustainable results-oriented reform process, the empowerment of democratic forces in the region and the transformative effect of EU integration are still unsatisfactory;

7. continues to be in favour of EU enlargement taking into account the current circumstances and the reality that the weakened credibility of the enlargement perspective might have a negative effect on the chances of success of the reforms that enlargement requires.

It takes the view that the current approach to enlargement is no longer able to serve our goals and underlines that the approach can be adapted to realities without amending the Copenhagen criteria or adding new ones, i.e. without revising the treaties, but by changing subsequent conditionality.

The Chamber of Deputies notes that, for the European integration mechanism to work effectively, EU conditionality should also focus, for example, on reducing the number of opponents of any association with the EU, removing institutional barriers created by clientelistic relationships among national political and economic elites, achieving results in managing the migrant inflow, and ensuring that institutions prone to corruption and administrative obstacles rest instead on solid democratic foundations;

8. notes that the lack of clear prospects for accession opens up a number of security risks in the region, including in terms of an increasing influence of third countries;

9. points out that countries' frustration with their inability to progress in EU accession could easily translate the already growing Euroscepticism into more blatant anti-Western sentiments that could be followed by a further rise of populism, nationalism and religious fundamentalism; it therefore believes that candidate and potential candidate countries currently need a political message of support from the EU in moving forward with the enlargement process.

It also takes the view that the Eastern Partnership countries, which are subject to diverse and intense pressure from the Russian Federation, should be given support in the form of strong political signals, in order to prevent them from abandoning hopes raised by the EU in the past;

10. notes that one of the challenging elements of the strategy is the Commission's approach to resolving outstanding bilateral disputes;

11. notes that the Commission has not followed up on all recommendations made by the Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group at the [Western] Balkans Summit in Vienna;

12. takes the view that within its enlargement strategy, the Commission should send more explicit messages regarding disputes such as those between Macedonia and Greece or Greece and Cyprus;

13. takes the view that the most significant limitation of the current EU enlargement approach is probably the lack of instruments to encourage states lagging behind in the accession process;

14. disagrees with the idea put forward by some analysts that the requirement to resolve bilateral disputes between Member States and candidate and potential candidate countries should be removed from the conditions for accession and that such disputes should be resolved either through international arbitration or through mediation mechanisms composed of representatives of the main EU institutions. It believes that this would alienate the Member States concerned, as they would lose their say, resulting in considerable tensions within the EU at a time already marked by distrust;

15. takes the view, at the same time, that the involvement of Member States in EU accession negotiations and the imposition of bilateral conditions would create an additional difficulty that would threaten the already fragile credibility of EU conditionality;

16. notes that candidate country progress reports are based on a system that is still not uniform and which uses different indicators and assesses different elements for different countries, making comparisons between candidate countries more difficult. It believes that the system should emphasise the quality side of the progress made, given that a mere high number of harmonisation acts, for instance, cannot make up for shortcomings in the judicial system;

17. the EU should make its progress assessment criteria in the different reform areas more explicit and apply them in a uniform manner to all countries, assess the progress made rigorously, communicate the findings unequivocally for every country, and remove any doubt that the rewards will come once the conditions are met;

18. welcomes the Commission's stated intention to keep the focus of enlargement policy, as in previous years, on 'fundamental issues' such as the rule of law, fundamental rights, reform of the public administration, and economic development and competitiveness - all of which are areas viewed as complementary and indivisible.

It is pleased that respect for the fundamental values of the European Union is equally considered a major objective;

19. maintains that enlargement should be a strict but fair process, based on well-established criteria and lessons learned from past experiences, and that future Member States should be well-prepared, so as to enhance the credibility of enlargement policy and gain public support in both current and future Member States;

20. acknowledges that the message that emerges from the Commission's Communication, namely that the enlargement process is an investment in Europe's security and prosperity, continues to hold true despite the difficulties pointed out;

21. welcomes the fact that candidate and potential candidate countries are required to submit annual economic reform programmes similar to those required from Member States, as this will allow them to become familiar with the standards and requirements of EU membership and will make future tasks easier;

22. takes the view that Romania must remain in permanent dialogue with candidate countries and associated countries and step up the exchange of best practices, based on the experience and expertise that it acquired on its own path to accession in the reform of areas of interest in the new enlargement strategy: human rights, strengthening the rule of law, and reform of the judicial, economic, administrative, energy, defence and security fields.

*This Decision was adopted by the Chamber of Deputies at its sitting of 13 April 2016, in compliance with Article 76(2) of the Romanian Constitution, republished.*

PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES  
VALERIU-ȘTEFAN ZGONEA

Bucharest, 13 April 2016

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