

interview \_\_\_\_\_

## Leonard Orban

Romanian Minister of European Affairs



**Minister Orban, how would you appreciate Romania’s economic and social evolution five years from its accession to the European Union? To what extent has our country capitalised on the opportunities arising from the EU membership?**

The fifth anniversary of Romania’s accession to EU is, indeed, a good moment for evaluation. This is also one of the reasons why we organised at the beginning of February together with MFA (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) the conference “Romania in the EU. Five years from accession”. The conference was a very useful exercise for the analysis of our country’s course within the

European Union from the perspective of capitalising on opportunities, but especially from the perspective of drawbacks that we encountered and for the remedy of which sustained efforts are still needed.

At a realistic analysis, we can admit that the picture is a mixed one. On one hand, there are the benefits arising from the free movement of people, goods and services, foreign direct investment, the absorption of community funds or the intensified trade with other member states. All of these are economic benefits. The political benefits, related to Romania’s participation to the European decision-making process, our country contributing thus to the configuration of the future of the EU and its policies, are equally important. Moreover, I would like to mention the benefits arising from being part of an area of security and stability.

On the other hand, there are the drawbacks mentioned earlier. The access of Romanian workers on the EU labour market is limited, the degree of absorption of EU funds is unsatisfactory, a decision regarding our accession to the Schengen area has not been taken ...

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event \_\_\_\_\_

## Romania in the EU. Five years from accession

On 1 January 2012 Romania marked its fifth anniversary from the accession to the European Union. It was celebrated within the conference organised by the Ministry of European Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Representation of the European Commission in Romania, on 2 February this year.

The conference brought together in the Central University Library’s conference room politicians and members of the executive, central administration officials, researchers and academics ...

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... yet, although Romania has fulfilled all the relevant obligations, the Mechanism for Cooperation and Verification continues to encumber Romania's image as a full EU Member State. Of course, some of these issues were aggravated by the economic and financial crisis; others are related to the inexplicably inflexible attitude of some Member States. Others, however, rest strictly with us. It is important to continue and even intensify our efforts for integration. The Romanians are European citizens and have every right to benefit from the advantages of the membership to the same extent as the citizens of any other Member State.

**How would you estimate Romania's efforts towards increasing the degree of absorption of European funds, taking into account the numerous difficulties faced during this process?**

The degree of absorption of European funds is very small, but we are committed to modify this situation considerably. The absorption rate of the European funds Romania benefits from, as a whole, is nearly 19%, while that of the structural and cohesion funds in February 2012 is 6.3%. For this second category of funds, the coordination of which falls within the competences of the Ministry of European Affairs, we undertake to achieve 20% by the end of the current year.

To this end, we have already adopted a series of measures and many others are planned. For instance, at the end of last year, the obligation for management authorities to process, within 45 working days at most, the applications sent by beneficiaries for the reimbursement of expenses made for the implementation of projects financed from structural and cohesion funds, was instituted by emergency ordinance. Now, one of our priorities is to simplify the procedures for verifying these reimbursement applications, so that the time limit provided for can be complied with. Other measures with effect on the growth of the absorption rate were the increase by 10 percentage points of the co-financing rate and the introduction of eligibility of non-deductible VAT from structural instruments for projects approved from 1 January 2012.

For 2012 we aim at establishing more clear rules regarding the granting and recovery of pre-financing as well as withdrawal of financing and, at the same time, the re-allocation of funds between different operational programs.

Apart from these initiatives and the ones intended to make the absorption process on the current financial perspective more transparent, we are equally concerned with the future multi-annual financial framework, for the negotiation of which we will

invest as much energy as necessary to ensure that Romania will continue to benefit of a similar allocation level.

**Leonard Orban is Minister of European Affairs since September 2011.**

Between March 2010 and September 2011 he was **Presidential Advisor** for European Affairs.

Leonard Orban was the first **Romanian Commissioner of the European Commission**. From January 2007 until February 2010 he was a Member of the European Commission responsible for Multilingualism.

Being involved in the process of negotiation for Romania's accession to the European Union since May 2001, Leonard Orban first held the position of **Deputy Chief Negotiator with the European Union, until December 2004** and then **Chief Negotiator with the European Union**.

After the signing of the Treaty for Romania's Accession to the European Union, Leonard Orban continued his activity in the Ministry of European Affairs as **Secretary of State** until December 2006.

Between 1993 – 2001, he was Parliamentary Advisor for European and International Affairs at the Chamber of Deputies.

Leonard Orban has graduated the Faculty of Mechanics of the University of Braşov and the Faculty of Management of the Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest.

At the same time, we need to be realistic and to understand that there is still a lot to be done.

I consider important to mention that, beyond the real rate of absorption, the contracting rate for the structural and cohesion funds is 67% and we aim for 90% by the end of the year.

Last, but not least, in my opinion, the situation needs to be considered on the whole. Firstly, Romania is a net beneficiary in the relation with the European Union. According to the data available at the end of 2011, our country has received EUR 11.91bn from the EU budget starting from 1 January 2007 and has contributed with EUR 6.24bn. The difference constitutes Romania's net benefit for the first five years since accession.

**Which are the sensitive economic and monetary areas in which the Member States would need more firm and better harmonised actions so that the Treaty on stability, coordination and governance in the Economic and Monetary Union can constitute a reference point for the internal reforms?**

Since the outbreak of the economic crisis, an impressive number of measures aiming to reduce the effects of the crisis and re-launch the economic growth were adopted at the level of the EU. Many of these initiatives were unimaginable several years ago. It is clear that the European Union is not the same since

the crisis. The Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Semester, the two packages on economic governance or the Euro Plus Pact are initiatives rising from the need to ensure a closer economic coordination and a sustainable fiscal consolidation.

The Treaty on stability, coordination and governance in the Economic and Monetary Union completes the European legislative framework on budget and imbalance surveillance with a view to extending the coordination in the field of economic policies and improving the euro zone governance. The main obligations provided for in the Treaty refer to the budget deficit (Title III) and economic policy coordination (Title IV), the most sensitive area where the Member States will need to be more rigorous.

Romania's constant objective was to be part of the European evolutions related to the economic governance and it joined itself actively to all initiatives in this respect. We joined the Euro Plus Pact, we declared our availability to sign the Treaty

and we got involved in general in all debates on economic governance. We wished to join to these initiatives in order to promote our points of view and to contribute to the consolidation of the EU.

Beyond the initiatives concerning the strengthening of economic governance in the EU, it is essential to focus on measures intended to stimulate the economic growth, to create jobs and increase competitiveness.

**Which would be, in your opinion, the costs and benefits of signing the above mentioned treaty by Romania?**

Romania will sign the intergovernmental treaty at the European Council of 1 March, this year. The decision to be taken refers to the moment from which Romania will apply entirely or partially its provisions.

The benefits of Romania's joining the treaty and of implementing its provisions to an extent as large as possible are obvious. Firstly, the compliance with the provisions of this treaty can insure a better budget discipline at national level, representing in this respect an additional guarantee of the internal efforts to ensure macroeconomic stability and financial sustainability on medium and long term.

Secondly, for Romania, as a country under obligation to adopt the single currency, compliance with the provisions of the treaty can contribute to a better preparation for entering the euro zone.

**"The Romanians are European citizens and have every right to benefit from the advantages of the membership to the same extent as the citizens of any other Member State."**

Thirdly, by joining the treaty, Romania will have the possibility to participate and to be involved in negotiations regarding the euro zone governance, thus contributing to the making of decisions which are and will be concerning us directly.

Last, but not least, Romania's association to this treaty is an expression of the political support that our country gives to the European project, by supporting actions at European level, which is the best approach to the challenges we are facing in the economic environment as well as in the social and political ones.

**Considering the approval by the Government of the law on the coordination of the Parliament - Government relation in the field of European affairs, to what extent do you think this regulatory act can have a real contribution to increasing the transparency of the decision-making process in the field of European affairs?**

The draft of the law on cooperation between Government and Parliament in the field of European affairs has been adopted by the Government on 18 January 2012 and it is currently under debate in the Parliament. I hope that this law will also be adopted by the Parliament as soon as possible because it is a useful element for the coordination of the European affairs. Even though there has been some collaboration between Government and Parliament so far, the entry into force of this law will allow the intensification of the cooperation between these two institutions for the benefit of a more efficient representation of Romania's interests in Brussels.

Interview by **Oana Mocanu**  
(23 February 2012)

analysis | opinion

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## **Vox populi, vox Dei! European Citizens' Initiative - between uncertain democratisation and potential dangers**

The European Union has often been accused of a so-called 'democratic deficit', characterised by citizens' low involvement in European institution issues (low turnout at the European Parliament elections, lack of transparency in decision-making, lack of identification with European values and decisions taken at European level, etc.). Taking into consideration this situation, the Lisbon Treaty tried to stimulate the development of participatory democracy by introducing one of its key elements in the European political processes - the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)<sup>1</sup>.

ECI is optional, as it is basically an invitation addressed to the European Commission to propose a set of legislative measures in its areas of expertise. There are certain requirements in terms of substance and forms: a minimum of one million supporters from at least seven Member States, the existence of a 'citizens' committee', etc.

Thus, this is one initiative that, in theory at least, is designed to democratise the European public space and to revitalise the participatory democracy concept. European decision-makers hope we will thereby witness in the future the narrowing of the gap between citizens and institutions and, respectively, to the creation of a European public space which will encourage trans-border debates.



<sup>1</sup> The citizens' right of initiative is laid down by Article 11(4) of the Treaty on European Union: "Not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties." Available online at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:083:0013:0046:RO:PDF> Last accessed on 20 February 2012.

Participatory democracy is already a reality existing at national level; it is expressed through different means (citizens' initiatives, referendums, etc.) and is intended to expand at European level. ECI therefore is here to supplement the democratic 'arsenal' at continental level by providing a mechanism to help promote those initiatives desired by citizens, but which, for some reason, were not taken into consideration by decision-makers.

At this point, we can only speculate about the first citizens' initiatives, but most likely these will concern environmental, social and employment issues. Most often, there will be issues lacking solutions at national level or a strong support on the home front, issues which, it is hoped, once extended to European level, will acquire the necessary visibility. One example could be, in theory, linked to the problems generated by mining projects in the new Member States, relying on Western citizens' increased concern for the environment as opposed to those from the New Europe<sup>2</sup>. The ECI can, by tackling such niche topics, lead to further Europe-wide cooperation between various non-governmental foundations and organisations seeking to set such issues on the public agenda. Moreover, we might witness an increased role for labour unions, which can, through their mobilising force, lead to a uniform European legislative area.

The ECI is setting the premises for active involvement in public life, fulfilling a set of minimum criteria, defined by Robert Dahl<sup>3</sup>, which would justify defining the EU as a democracy. The ECI allows for citizens' *effective participation, voting equality, control over the debated issue*, inclusion of all adults willing to get involved and a minimum understanding of the issue. These are just the minimum criteria, yet they may often be used for purposes contrary to democracy.

We therefore come to identify, at first glance, a set of problems that may affect the proper functioning of this mechanism, one of the most benign yet most important one being the *linguistic barrier*. This calls for the active involvement of Community institutions in simultaneous translations of all aspects pertaining to ECI in order to facilitate citizens' access to their rights and to eliminate linguistic discrimination.

The demands backed by popular support have not always proven to be beneficial to democracy. This leads us to another one of ECI's potential risks: *the misappropriation of democratic mechanisms to support initiatives of populist, racial, religious etc. nature*, which would undermine the very foundations of the democratic system. We might thus face demands targeting sensitive areas (like the Swiss referendum on banning minarets), demands exacerbated by the current economic crisis. Nevertheless, there is a danger, albeit small, that such an initiative will be used by a small number of persons for purely propagandistic purposes and not as an expression of a citizen body, of an actual and socially useful concern. We are facing the risk of the emergence of a 'dictatorship' by an active minority that would assume the control of the public agenda due to the increased mobilising power of its supporters.

ECI also poses an interesting problem for political theory - that of the old debate on who should be governing: citizens or technocrats? *To what extent are citizens competent in government related issues?* Can a simple citizen have a say in technical issues pertaining to environmental protection or in economic issues? One possible example concerns the aforementioned initiative for free Sundays. Given the obvious loss in competitiveness at international level, is there any justification for adopting another measure that will only add to the gap?

We could also mention the *risk of misappropriating the ECI for commercial purposes*. Who can guarantee that a commercial company with significant resources will not be able to impose a citizens' initiative favouring its commercial policy?

One last argument against the truly democratic nature of the ECI has to do with the *possibility that the European Commission might disregard the initiative put forth*. Can we really talk about democracy and equal rights where an authority that was not elected by vote can decide that a citizens' initiative is to be disregarded? Aren't we thus risking causing even more frustration to citizens who see their voice ignored?

In the end, except for some major political advantages, the initiative poses a mid and long-term risk - given the absence of a body of educated citizens - to cause problems in the proper functioning of the European society. Even so, the alternative would be worse - since it is always better to live in a democratic society where issues will be eventually solved than in a 'utopian' society ruled by elites lacking democratic legitimacy.

For more details on the ECI, please refer to <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome?lg=ro>

Mihai Sebe

<sup>2</sup> One possible solution in this direction is provided through the project launched by Martin Kastler (MEP), aiming for shops to be closed on Sundays to enable people to spend time with their families: <http://www.free-sunday.eu/>. Last accessed on 27 February 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Dahl, *On Democracy* (translation - Editura Institutul European, Iași, 2003).



## 2012 Spring Issue of Romanian Journal of European Affairs

In the first issue of this year the authors propose to us interesting topics related to: the *Europeanisation* of the Western Balkans, with a focus on Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), the security community theory applied in the BiH, the cooperation and competition in the European Parliament, the risks entailed by the absence of the European parties in the European politics, the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Romanian public and media perception on the *Schengen exam*.

**Iordan Gheorghe Bărbulescu**, Jean Monnet Professor of European Studies at the National School for Political Studies and Administration (SNSPA), Romania, and **Miruna Troncotă**, PhD candidate at SNSPA, look at the ambivalent role of the EU in the Western Balkans. The paper examines the role of the EU in the Western Balkans with a focus on democratic institution-building and also it takes Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) as a case study, aiming at determining whether there is a need for a new theoretical framework in order to more accurately define the specific process of the *Europeanisation* in this region.

In his contribution to this issue, **Bedrudin Brljavac**, MA in European Affairs at Lund University, discusses the security community theory applied to Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). A unified BiH army is making small, but significant contributions towards security maintenance both at national and global level. The article explains the efforts of Bosnian politicians to bring the country into the Euro-Atlantic structures and send their troops into multi-national missions. The author makes note that NATO-related reforms have strengthened security and peace-building attempts among the former warring ethnic groups. As a NATO aspirant, Bosnia intends today to become a country that exports security.

**Alexandru Volacu**, currently undergoing an MA in Political Theory and Analysis at the National School for Political Studies and Administration (SNSPA), analyzes in his article the nature of the legislative process which takes place within the European Parliament (EP) by studying the bilateral interactions among its relevant decisional groups, i.e. the parliamentary groups. **Volacu** uses a methodological approach inspired from the game theory, describing these interactions in the form of non-cooperative games similar in structure and function to the “negotiator’s dilemma” model proposed by Lax and Sebenius. By comparing at a theoretical level the optimal strategies employed by parties in national parliaments with a majority-supported government with the optimal strategies employed by groups in the European Parliament, the author concludes that the level of bilateral cooperation in the EP surpasses the one existent in national legislatures as cooperation is induced through the systemic relation developed among the groups as well as through institutional and ideological factors.

Assistant in the Department of Political Sciences at Université libre de Bruxelles and researcher at Centre d’Etudes de la Vie Politique (CEVIPOL), **Cristina Stănculescu** argues upon the relative absence of the European political parties on the European politics arena. The current European debates show that these parties remain marginal actors of the European decision-making process. The article tackles two questions related to



the European political parties: first - why have these parties formed and developed if they do not play the role classic political parties do; and second - why aren't they playing this role? The answer to the first question is to be found in the spill over process that has been caused by the growth of European Parliament's competencies and by the debate on EU's democratic deficit. As for the second question, both the structure of the European political system and the internal heterogeneity of the European political parties limit their capacity to develop. Thus, it seems that EU's founding compromise between supranational and intergovernmental positions is the most appropriate explanation for European political parties' capacity/incapacity to establish themselves as “key” European actors.

**Nicoleta Lășan**, PhD candidate in International Relations and European Studies at „Babeș-Bolyai” University Cluj Napoca, Faculty of History and Philosophy, intends to explain that historical institutionalism can accommodate the 1992 and 2003 reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy, but the changes needed to adapt this policy of the EU to the conditions of an ever enlarging Europe will take place slowly, if at all. Historical institutionalism, one of the three forms of new institutionalism, has been largely employed by scholars to explain the development of one of the first policies developed at the European level, namely the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Due to historical institutionalism's claim that policies tend to follow the path set at their creation, it is not surprising that it could easily account for the development of the CAP before 1990s since this was one of the most resistant policies set by the member states of the European Union. **Lășan** concludes that the reforms of the CAP can be seen as limited, constrained and incremental and this is exactly what historical institutionalists claim about institutions and policies that are path-dependent.

The book review of this issue, written by **Flavia Durach**, graduate student at the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations, National School of Political and Administrative Studies, concerns the book “*Examenul Schengen. În căutarea sferei publice europene*” (The Schengen Exam. In Search of the European Public Sphere), written by **Alina Bărgăoanu**, Professor and PhD advisor at the National School for Political Studies and Public Administration, Faculty of Communication and Public Relations. The author of the book tests the viability of the concept of “Europeanized public spheres” in the particular context of the negotiations for Romania's accession to the Schengen area of free movement. The book addresses the coverage of the Schengen subject in foreign mass-media, Romanian media, the public perception on the matter and the opinion of Romanian high profile actors involved in European affairs. The entire research indicates a predominantly local, national perspective when dealing with the Schengen affair, thus suggesting that the Romanian public sphere is largely disconnected, even isolated from EU trends.

The articles are available at [www.ier.ro/rjea](http://www.ier.ro/rjea). For the printed copy, please contact [sales-rjea@ier.ro](mailto:sales-rjea@ier.ro).

Oana Mocanu

## Romania in the EU. Five years from accession

On 1 January 2012 Romania marked its fifth anniversary from the accession to the European Union. It was celebrated within the conference organised by the Ministry of European Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Representation of the European Commission in Romania, on 2 February this year.

The conference brought together in the Central University Library's conference room politicians and members of the executive, central administration officials, researchers and academics, representatives of the civil society and of the business environment, diplomats and journalists.

The event was structured in three parts, an opening part, reserved for the speeches of the Romanian and European high officials, followed by two sessions of presentations and dialogue on the challenges and opportunities of EU economic dimension and the Romanian citizen - European citizen relation.



The anniversary was marked by the discourses of key politicians from Romania, represented at high level by Traian Băsescu, President of Romania, Emil Boc - Prime-Minister at the time, Cristian Diaconescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Leonard Orban, Minister of European Affairs. The European Commission participated alongside the Romanian officials by a video message of congratulations from President José Manuel Barroso and by the speech held by Dacian Cioloș, the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development.

The Romanian high officials reviewed the context and the course of Romania's accession to the EU, gave their appreciation on the success and shortcomings registered during the past five years since accession and on what is to be done in the future. They highlighted the major role of the common objective of acceding to the Euro-Atlantic structures, which has unified the Romanian society and generated a catching up of the European standards by the Romanian institutions and their functioning mode. The main shortcomings are in the funds absorption and the maintenance of the Mechanism of Cooperation and Verification (MCV), in the context of inconsistencies of the political class.

As for the objectives to be achieved, the growth of productivity, job creation, promoting social inclusion, accession to the Schengen area and a better valorisation of the agricultural potential were mentioned. The agriculture, tourism and energy but, above all, creativity constitute fields in which Romania can excel at the EU level.

The anniversary, in the speakers' opinion, gives the opportunity for a necessary reflection on a project of national consensus which would generate consistency in attaining Romania's objectives within the EU and provide solutions for what went wrong. Romania can contribute to deep integration of the EU in order to allow it to become a „leader of global politics”.

Thanking the Romanian authorities for the solidity of their commitment to the European Union, the Commission's representatives pointed out the constructive role of the accession process and the benefits of the EU membership emphasizing the importance of capitalising on the EU member status and the opportunities generated by this fact. Romania must consolidate its role of active agent within the European transformation process, strengthen its capacity to attract resources and expertise in order to convince its European partners.

The risks and opportunities of the economic dimension of the EU have been presented and debated from various perspectives. Thus, Attila Korodi, the President of the Foreign Policy Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, spoke about parliamentary cooperation as support for inter-regional cooperation; Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, Member of Parliament and former Prime-Minister, approached the European Union as a Liberal economic and political project; Daniel Dăianu, University Professor, former MEP and Minister of Finance, presented the economic evolutions at European level and the solutions to exit the crisis; the representative of the Bucharest Chamber of Commerce and Industry presented a perspective of the Romanian companies in the EU and Bogdan Murgescu, University Professor, brought up a historical perspective for bridging the economic gaps between Romania and the EU.

During the session on the relation between the notion of Romanian citizen and European citizen, governmental, civil society and mass-media opinions were presented. Thus, Bogdan Aurescu, Secretary of State within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, spoke about the challenges posed to Romania by the free movement within the EU, Lidia Barac, Secretary of State within the Ministry of Justice, mentioned the evaluation of the judiciary reform process and of the fight against corruption five years on from the institution of MCV, Dumitru Sandu, University Professor, approached Romania from the perspective of the states of mind in the European worlds, Sanda Pralong, President of the Romanian Public Relations Association, talked about citizenship and communication between the governed and the government and Ovidiu Nahoi, senior editor, discussed the occurrence of European themes in the Romanian media.

The questions and comments of the participants, at the end of the sessions, prompted elaborations and clarifications from the speakers and completed the picture of Romania five years on from the accession.

The conference gave the opportunity to discuss Romania's performances and priorities on the European track, marking the passage to a more ambitious stage of its EU membership.

For further details, please visit: <http://www.dae.gov.ro/351/conferin-a-quot-romania-in-ue-5-ani-de-la-aderare>

Julian Onească

## Green Paper: Restructuring and anticipation of change

*Restructuring and anticipation of change* is a document drawn up by the European Commission in order to set the basis for consultation with European citizens interested in restructuring enterprises and in its effects on the social level.

The objective of consultations consists, on the one hand, of identifying the best practices and policies that promote job creation, growth and competitiveness within the Europe 2020 Strategy and, in particular, in the field of industrial policy (the emblematic initiative “An agenda for new competences and jobs”) and, on the other hand, of improving the relationships between the parties interested in restructuring and adapting: employees, enterprises, public authorities, member states and institutions of the European Union.

The results of the consultations will be analysed by the European Commission in order to find the most adequate ways of disseminating and implementing the best practices, also at the level of the European Union. In this perspective, support is intended for the EU institutions and also to national governments in order to be able to respond to the difficulties caused by the economic crisis and to achieve their competitiveness objectives on the long term.

The conclusions following the consultations will be enclosed by the European Commission in a new agenda on the flexibility of the labour force. Another objective is the re-launch of the debate on restructuring enterprises and methods to approach it.

The fields in which the opinions of the European citizens are requested are the anticipation of the restructuring processes, their preparation and administration, the evaluation of and reporting on the role of the social dialog and revision of the notion of “passive protection”.

The direct beneficiaries of this initiative will be the employees who will be able to acquire easier the new competences necessary to continue their career, the European regions which are able to sustain functional market economies and enterprises which need a strengthening of competitiveness following restructuring.

The EU’s intervention, by implementing policies such as the EU industrial competitiveness policy and the Agenda for new competences and new jobs, thus becomes primordial for a coordinated reaction of national governments, in the context of managing the process of restructuring and anticipation of change in the field of labour force and social affairs.

The European Commission invites the interested parties to answer the Green Paper questions by 30 March 2012 at: <http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=restructuring&lang=en>.

Further information available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=333&langId=ro&consultId=9&visib=0&furtherConsult=yes>

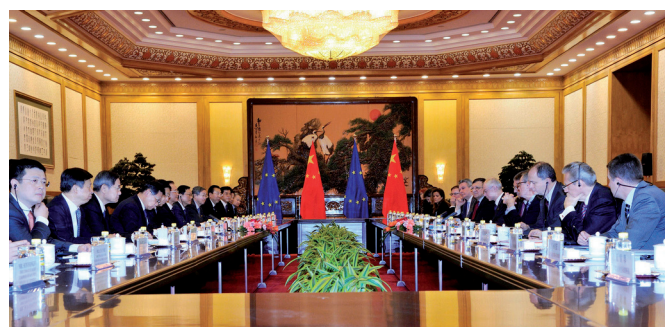
Raluca Georgiana Săftescu

## EU – China Summit

On 14 February 2012, the 14<sup>th</sup> EU - China Summit took place in Beijing, with the participation of China’s Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, the President of the European Union, Herman Van Rompuy and the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso<sup>1</sup>. The meeting was dominated by the issue of the sovereign debt crisis in Europe, in the context that China fears the effects of these turbulences on its own economy.

Without specifying whether it will invest in a bailout fund intended to help out the states affected by debts, the Chinese Prime Minister urged Europe to solve its financial crisis itself<sup>2</sup> and held that Beijing is willing to increase its participation in solving the European debts problems and to communicate and cooperate more closely with the EU. At the same time, China will continue to invest in European government bonds ensuring their security, liquidity and the appreciation of their value and will continue to be involved in solving the European economic crisis by several possible means, including the International Monetary Fund and the European Financial Stability Fund.

The need for better access to the Chinese market for the EU companies and a better protection of intellectual property rights was mentioned, the two economies being interdependent and a change in the growth rhythm of one of the two partners having a direct and palpable effect upon the other. At the same time, the EU is willing to grant “rapidly” to China the status of market economy, a measure which will help it sell its goods in Europe at a cheaper price.



<sup>1</sup> Full press release: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/127967.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/127967.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.agerpres.ro/media/index.php/international/item/105917.html>



The two parties share the opinion that they should increase their two-way investments, promote balanced and sustainable development of bilateral trade, strengthen cooperation in scientific research and innovation, deepen the cooperation in energy and environment protection and promote partnership in urbanization.

Other aspects discussed during the summit were international and regional issues of common interest such as the Iranian nuclear issue, North Africa, Syria and the Middle East and the participants expressed their desire to strengthen the dialogue and to cooperate in order to promote global peace and security.

Costin Fălcuță

EP

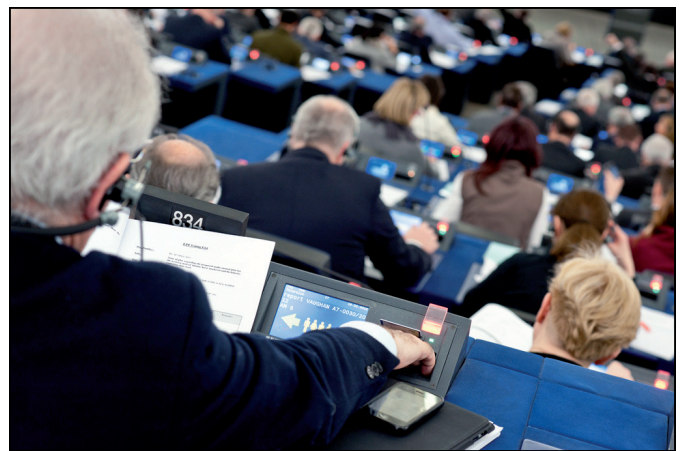
## THE EUROPEAN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT GATHERED IN A PLENARY MEETING IN STRASBOURG 13 – 16 February

The session opened with the Commission's declaration **Situation of homeless people in Europe following the cold wave** delivered by Michel Barnier, Commissioner for the Internal Market and Services. The Commission's position is that the efforts of the Member States are vital to improve the situation of these people who are experiencing an extreme form of social exclusion. The debates in plenary meeting concerned the civil society in the social Europe, the solidarity networks, food aid, the devastating effects of the crisis on the thousands of homeless persons, elderly people, people without family or jobless people. The Commission raised the question why there are only banks that are saved, with great efforts, and not also people.

The EP continued the debate on the **distribution of food products** to the most underprivileged people in the EU, for which it had, since 2008, formulated recommendations to the Council and it adopted a legislative resolution as concerns the adoption a regulation amending the current ones for the distribution of food products to the most underprivileged people in the EU. It provides that only products of Community origin, fresh, made in the EU, with integral Community financing are to be distributed, due to the fact that the Member States are facing financial difficulties.

The **preparation for the Spring European Council** (1 - 2 March) presented an opportunity for debates on economic governance, euro area issues and how **Greece** can overcome the crisis by economic growth, after the budget cuts. The EP Members expressed widely varying points of view on Greece: thus, reforms of the tax system, privatisation of the ports and of the energy sector were proposed, as well as the return to the national currency (drachma). The policy of job creation for youth was one of the points shared by all MEPs, although not all of them agreed to reduce taxation for the undertakings employing youth.

The European Commission's communication **Annual analysis of growth for 2012**<sup>1</sup> - in which it is mentioned that "economic relaunch is in a period of stagnation and the decrease in the level of trust affects the investments and the consumption" - was subject to debates following the positions presented by the rapporteurs of the EP Commissions for Economic and Monetary Affairs and Employment and Social Affairs.



The MEPs expressed their position in the resolutions adopted by which they demand sustained efforts for growth and employment, with a special focus on youth and fighting poverty. These objectives require a stronger economic coordination, a better application of recommendations regarding structural reforms in the Member States.

In order to ensure the **stability of the euro**, the EP adopted the resolution regarding the feasibility of introducing stability bonds, considering that these can be an additional means to stimulate the compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact, provided that aspects related to the moral hazard and common responsibility are considered and in the perspective that euro becomes a reserve currency at global level. At present, the interest in ensuring stability on the long term of the euro derives from the fact that it is used by over 330 million people and by a large number of undertakings and investors, affecting indirectly the rest of the world.

EP's Fisheries Committee gave various subjects for the common debate as concerns the multi-annual plan for fish stocks and fishing units, about the admissible captures and the **common fisheries policy**.

EP has given a **green light to the liberalization of EU - Morocco trade** in agricultural and fishing products for a 10 year period, while approving Morocco's participation to some EU programs (competitiveness, innovation, freight transport, customs, air traffic control). The MEPs voted however with reservations

<sup>1</sup> Commission's Communication on 23 November 2011, [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/annual\\_growth\\_survey\\_ro.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/annual_growth_survey_ro.pdf)



the increase of quotas and the decrease and even elimination of customs taxes for the trade in these products (369 votes for, 225 against and 31 abstentions). A significant minority in the EP brought into the debate concerns regarding the ways in which this liberalisation might affect the small farms in the EU, as well as objections regarding the environment and work conditions in Morocco.

Moreover, the EP's specialised committees drew up a series of **recommendations**. One of them concerns the agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Island, the Principality of Liechtenstein, the Kingdom of Norway and the Swiss Confederation, which states the participation of these states to the works of some committees concerning the application, enforcement and development of the **Schengen** acquis. Another recommendation refers to the institution of a multi-annual program for the policy on **radio frequency**

spectrum. Following a September 2011 report on the draft Regulation of the EP and of the Council on establishing the **technical requirements applicable to credit transfers and direct debits in euro**, a draft legislative resolution has been adopted, which contains, among other things, an amendment in order to consider the interests of the consumers and of other users in a sufficient and transparent manner.

Numerous debates were conducted on the situation in Syria, the recent political changes in Hungary, cases of human rights abuse, violation of democracy and of the rule of law in Belarus, Egypt and Japan.

For detailed information, please visit: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>

Mariana Bara

Promo

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## Between April – May, EIR's Training Unit will organise the following training programs:

**Expert in accessing structural and cohesion funds**, a program authorised by CNFPA (National Council for Adult Professional Training)

**When?** 2 - 6 April

**Which are the objectives of the program?**

To acquire skills and competences necessary to identify (types of funds, objectives, eligible applicants, activities, target groups, eligible expenses), access, draw up, carry out and implement (applicable legislation, organization, performing and monitoring activities, assessment and report on progress, human resources management, information and advertising, carrying on public procurement) a successful project.

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**L'avenir de la politique de cohésion**, workshop organised in partnership with *Ecole nationale d'administration*, the *Embassy of France in Bucharest* and the *French Institute of Bucharest* and subsidized by the *International Organisation of Francophony (OIF)* as part of the **TRAINING PLAN FOR THE ROMANIAN CIVIL SERVANTS 2012**.

Details on this workshop, including the precise timetable will be posted, as soon as they are available, on the web page: [http://www.ier.ro/index.php/site/page/calendar\\_cursuri\\_2012/](http://www.ier.ro/index.php/site/page/calendar_cursuri_2012/)

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**Development of competencies for the translation and revision of legal texts**

**When?** 7 - 11 May

**Which are the objectives of the program?**

This course is intended for all who are interested in translation and revision of legal texts and have proficient knowledge of French and/or English.

Highly interactive, the program is organised in thematic modules which are intended to develop competencies regarding the main steps, instruments and standards in translation, linguistic revision and legal revision, as well as terminological research, basic notions of law, mainly European law and case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the development of a responsible attitude, of critical analysis and of communication and organisation skills in this field.

## Trainer, program authorised by CNFPA

**When?** 21 - 25 May

### Which are the objectives of the program?

- To develop skills necessary to identify and analyse the needs for training with a view to adapting training to the individual and organisational objectives;
- To develop competencies involved in designing and delivering training sessions which, by adequate methods and means, would allow the optimal achievement of the training objectives;
- To improve efficient abilities to communicate, to motivate adults to learn and to eliminate any impediments to learning;
- To understand the psychological aspects involved in the process of training and group dynamics;
- To improve the capacity to manage the relation with oneself and with the group in order to solve difficult situations that might occur during training.

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## Legal system of the European Union, specialised training program

**When?** 28 - 29 May

### Which are the objectives of the program?

This program is intended mainly for legal experts and specialised personnel who, by the nature of their professional activities must be informed of the specialised notions regarding the EU institutions, the community acquis and the influence of European jurisdiction on the Romanian legal system.

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## Advantages

- Rich and up-to date content of information focused on the development of concrete competencies;
- Trainers with solid experience in the curriculum of the program as well as in delivering training sessions in this field of expertise;
- Moderate participation fees;
- Central location.

The training programs will take place at the European Institute of Romania, Bucharest, Blvd. Regina Elisabeta no. 7-9, Conference hall, 4<sup>th</sup> floor.

For further information on the courses, please visit: [http://www.ier.ro/index.php/site/page/calendar\\_cursuri\\_2012/](http://www.ier.ro/index.php/site/page/calendar_cursuri_2012/)

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