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H.E. Mr. Lazăr Comănescu

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Romania
to the Federal Republic of Germany



Your Excellency, almost six years on from Romania's accession to the European Union, how would you evaluate the advantages and also the costs of Romania's membership?

I would speak about commitments assumed rather than costs. It seems to me inappropriate to discuss about democracy, for example, in terms of costs. Or the EU has been both a promoter and a guarantor of democracy. Deficits in the functioning of democracy may sometimes appear but it is extremely important that EU avails of means to correct them. That is a big advantage. Another big advantage is that EU membership strengthens the capacity of a Member State to better promote

its initiatives both in domestic and foreign policy in accordance with the national interests.

Thus the development of a large scale project such as the Strategy for the Danube Region, initiated by Romania (and Austria) and the adoption of the Black Sea Synergy project (with the support of Germany) became possible. Romania is unfortunately still lagging behind in the use of the most important EU instrument for economic and social development that is the structural and cohesion funds. It is a different reality from what we were expecting in January 2007 and the factors behind it should assume the responsibility accordingly. I hope that the remaining time of the current multilateral financial framework allows the remedy, at least in part, of this deficiency. I also hope that the necessary conclusions are drawn so that such deficiencies are avoided in the next multiannual financial cycle ... **p.2**

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publications _____

Romanian Journal of European Affairs - Winter Issue 2012

In the fourth issue of this year's RJE, the contributors bring forward topics related to the EU's ability to develop capabilities for civilian crisis management, the theory of political monetary (dis)integration, a conceptual assessment of the *United States of Europe*, the cultural foundations of autocracy, an assessment of the Romanian economy's eco-efficiency and the Roma as a protected minority - policies and best practices in the EU ... **p.5**



In a 2010 interview you brought up the strengthening of a Bucharest - Berlin axis. Now, two years on from that interview, what is the status of the Romanian-German bilateral relations?

As I said back then, in qualifying a relationship, it is more important to look into its substance rather than its labelling. Or, the relations with Germany are probably the most intensive and comprehensive of the relations Romania has with a state inside or outside the EU.

To give a few examples:

- Germany is, by far, Romania's first trade partner: close to 18 billion euros in 2011 i.e. around 20% of Romania's foreign trade;
- The political dialogue at all levels has steadily developed. This year for example, 20 years on since the signing of the bilateral Treaty, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Berlin twice. Consultations between high level officials have also taken

place in Bucharest and Berlin on topics such as European affairs, the neighbourhood policy or strategic affairs. There is an excellent German-Romanian cooperation within the U.N. I would also mention the strong parliamentary contacts;

- Last but not least, mention should be made of the excellent cooperation in the area of minorities. The German minority living in Romania and the Germans with Romanian origins do represent a solid bridge between Romania and Germany.

The Black Sea Synergy and the Strategy for the Danube Region are two projects which benefited from Germany's support. How do you estimate the progress of these two initiatives in which Romania's contribution proved to be an important one?

I would add to the answer to the first question that we are already in the stage of implementing the Strategy for the Danube Region and that it is essential now to promote concrete solid projects in order to capitalise on the opportunities deriving from this strategy. The cooperation with Germany, particularly with the two lands crossed by the Danube, Baden Württemberg and Bavaria, offers exceptional opportunities in this respect. I expect that the Romanian participants to the Danube Strategy Forum (Regensburg, 27-28 November 2012) will come up with some specific project proposals.

During the '90s, a new trilateral cooperation structure emerged, made up of France, Germany and Poland, which was intended at some point, to be EU's new core, replacing the "Franco-German motor". What is the current relevance of the "Weimar Triangle" and to what extent the decisions discussed in this restricted format could influence politics at European level?

„Experience shows that every time the EU faced a crisis, new steps towards deepening the integration were made”

Things are a little more nuanced. I would first remind that the Franco-German duo has had and will certainly continue to have a central role in the European edifice. Secondly, the “Weimar Triangle” is a framework of cooperation between Germany and its two main direct neighbours. Thirdly, and very importantly, Germany is an active promoter of EU's further consolidation as an inclusive

process. This approach has been strongly supported by Romania as well. See, for instance, the fiscal pact or the banking union project.

The current economic context is still a context of crisis. What are the survival chances of the Euro zone? Which are the most appropriate measures to be taken for a real economic recovery?

Experience shows that every time the EU faced a crisis, new steps towards deepening the integration were made. I am confident that similar developments will follow the current crisis as well. ESM or the Banking Union are steps in this direction. It does not mean that there are no more risks and that reform measures are no more needed in several EU Member States. It is important, however, that budgetary discipline be accompanied by measures aimed at economic growth and increased European competitiveness. A strong support will be thus insured for a strong single currency. However, it would be mistaken to consider that the current crisis originates (only) in the Euro zone. One should neither forget where and how this crisis started, nor that it relates to a large extent to the financial and banking dimension of the global flows. Nor can it be ignored that we are dealing with global competition including in the monetary and financial field.

At the annual reunion of the Romanian diplomacy, you have pointed out deficiencies in the economic diplomacy, as compared to the situation in Germany. Which priority measures would be needed in this field in order to increase the competitiveness of the Romanian economy?

The key factor for facing the strong global competition lies in the performance which, in its turn, is closely depending on the capacity of capitalising on Romania's competitive advantages. The business environment is also important. The stability and predictability of the institutional and legal framework are essential and, in this respect, in Romania there is room for

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He was awarded in 1998 the diplomatic rank of Ambassador. He is a member of the Consultative Scientific Council of the European Institute of Romania, member of the Scientific Council of the Romanian Institute for International Studies and founding member of the Central European Forum in Warsaw. Between 1998 – 2001 he was Ambassador of Romania to NATO and between 2001 – 2008, Ambassador of Romania to the European Union. In 2008 he was Minister for Foreign Affairs.

In 2000, he was decorated with the High Officer National Order "Faithful Service", in 2007 with the Grand Cross of the same order and in 2009 he received in Germany (Neudrossenfeld – Bavaria) the Charles IV Europe Medal.

He graduated the Faculty of Foreign Trade within the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest and the “Course of French civilisation and contemporary language” at Sorbone – Paris. In 1983 he was awarded the title of Doctor in International Economic Relations by the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest.

He authors and co-authors articles and works in International Affairs and academic manuals on subjects of global economy.

improvement. Further development of the infrastructure is needed as well.

Back to the economic diplomacy, I said during the ambassadors' conference that serious improvements are required. I firstly have in mind the human resources allocated to the external economic representation and the way the network of this representation is shaped.

More substantial involvement of the Chambers of Commerce would be beneficial. The German experience in the matter could be a source of inspiration in this endeavour.

Finally, but not exhaustively, I would mention the role of the political actors, including those of the highest level, in promoting economic interests. The fact that in their visits abroad many heads of state/government or ministers are accompanied by representatives of the business community in their country speaks for itself in this respect.

Remaining in the same register, could you share with our readers your perception of Romania's foreign policy priorities on the medium and long term?

I have already referred to the need for a clear definition of the national interests and implicitly of the priority lines of action. This exercise can only be a collective one involving all those with responsibilities and expertise in this field.

Back to your question, I would first of all highlight the need of making better use of the opportunities deriving from Romania's membership to the EU and NATO. Increased focus should be placed at the same time on strengthening the cooperation with countries in other regions, particularly the emerging economies.

Interview by **Oana Mocanu**

analysis | opinion

Ukraine's Parliamentary Elections: Regression of Democracy?

On 28 October 2012, parliamentary elections were organized in Ukraine, under the strict scrutiny of international observers and following a tensioned campaign. Although the elections' official results were made public a while ago, their outcome is far from being clear, as the recent electoral process is being contested by the political opposition and criticized by external actors.

The elections stirred a lot of interest in the international community as their result would reflect the strength of President Yanukovich's political position and would predict the state's future geopolitical moves. However, there was much less enthusiasm in Ukraine, the popular state of mind being very different from the one that led to the Orange Revolution in 2005. The constant political scandals and the rampant corruption of the ruling elites might explain to a certain degree the population's lack of interest for the elections¹.



Source: <http://www.wikipedia.org/>

As expected, the ruling party - Yanukovich's russophile Party of Regions - practically won the elections, receiving just over 30 percent of the vote. It was followed by the United Opposition, led by Batkivshchina (Fatherland) political party, with 25 percent. The UDAR party of world renowned boxer Klitschko came in third place with almost 14 percent, followed closely by the Communist party with 13,18 percent.

The results were heavily contested by the opposition, the authorities being accused of manipulating the vote in the Party of Regions' advantage. Surprising unity was showed by the opposition as some of the main Ukrainian parties are discussing the possibility of boycotting the elections by rejecting the seats in Verkhova Rada (Ukraine's Parliament). Demonstrations were organized on Kiev's streets, the protesters asking for a recount of the votes in 13 electoral districts.

Although the official position of the Party of Regions was to dismiss the accusation, claiming that transparency was assured throughout the whole electoral process, civic and external observers are baking up the opposition's cause. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) catalogued the recent Ukrainian electoral process as a *democratic regress*, pointing out that the campaign was not transparent enough, as state resources were used by the ruling party's candidates and the media coverage was biased².

Is the alleged democratic regression a sign that Ukraine is turning its back to the European Union? Not so long ago, the democratic developments in Ukraine were seen as some of the most successful within the Eastern Partnership. However, since Yanukovich came to power in 2010, it seems that part of the democratic gains of the Orange Revolution were lost. In the aftermath of his investment, the president started to consolidate his power by placing people from his entourage in key political and administrative positions and by punishing opposition leaders. In an unstable domestic political climate, he rapidly set the relations with Russia on good tracks, agreeing to make some concession in exchange of cheaper Russian natural gas. Developments such as the renewal of Black Sea Fleet lease until 2042 and the exclusion of NATO membership from Ukraine's foreign policy goals showed a concrete tilt towards Kremlin³. All these developments deeply dissatisfied the EU, which chose to punish Ukraine by putting the finalization of an *Association Agreement* on hold.

¹ Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, *Ukrainian Students Selling Votes on Social Network*, <http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-students-sell-their-votes/24751959.html>, last accessed on 8 November 2012

² OSCE, *Ukrainian elections marred by lack of level playing field, say international observers*, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/96673>, last accessed on 13 November 2012

³ Moshes, A., *Russia's European Policy under Medvedev: How Sustainable is a New Compromise?*, *International Affairs*, 2012, 88: 1, p.26

As it seems clear that, in spite of the opposition's efforts, the Party of Regions will eventually be able to enjoy a solid majority of parliamentary seats, more Russian involvement in Ukraine's politics and further stagnation (or deterioration) of EU- Ukraine relations could be expected. However, experts warn the EU that Ukraine cannot simply cut its traditional ties to Russia, and a deeper collaboration between the Union and Ukraine should not be conditioned by Kiev's geopolitical alliances⁴. Moreover, there are concrete signs that the Russian-Ukrainian relationship is not as "rosy" as many believe. The Ukrainian politicians continue to refuse to be part of some of Moscow's most precious plans such as the subordination of the main Ukrainian gas company to the Russian state owned Gazprom or membership to the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Thus, one can conclude that despite the symbolic signs of affection towards Russia, the Ukrainian politicians are unlikely to accept too much Russian involvement that could eventually hamper their financial and political interests. However, even if the Russian element will be taken out of the equation as some propose, the EU - Ukrainian relation is not likely to get better, as long as Yanukovych and his "family" will maintain their dominance over the political scene by using undemocratic and uncivil means.

The results of the 2012 election transmit a clear message: Yanukovych is here to stay! In this situation, one of the main questions to be answered is how many more compromises is the EU willing to take? "Not that many" seems to be the answer, if we look at the recent development of the EU-Ukrainian relation. However, there is a positive aspect of this year's Ukrainian election - the political opposition seems stronger than expected and the EU might thus find a surprisingly strong ally within the Ukrainian borders.

Alexandra Pop, intern

What Do We Lack to Be a Schengen State?

The objective to join the Schengen area is a commitment which ensued logically from Romania's Treaty of Accession to EU, an objective agreed upon and prepared together with the EU successive presidencies, for the accomplishment of which Romania has observed all the existing rules and completely met all the necessary criteria.

We consider it important to underline that the accession process of an EU Member State to join the Schengen area has a considerable dimension of preparation and technical appraisal as concerns the complete implementation of the provisions of the Schengen acquis and the Romanian authorities have made constant and laborious efforts to this effect.

In all the fields subject to appraisal, the investments made by Romania for the modernization of equipment and adequate training of the human resources have been considerable and appreciated as such by Member States, as well as by the European Commission officials, who participated to the appraisal visits.

Within this extensive preparatory process, the appraisal missions for Romania took place in March 2009 - December 2010. Teams of experts from Member States and European institutions assessed Romania's progress in the correct and complete implementation of the provisions of the Schengen area, in the fields of police cooperation, personal data protection, visas, maritime, land and air borders and use of SIS/SIRENE systems.

Finally, the successive appraisal missions underlined that Romania meets all the criteria laid down by the European legislation regulating the accession to the Schengen area and its functioning.

Naturally, at the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting of 9 June 2011, the EU Ministers of Home Affairs welcomed

the successful completion of the technical appraisal process of Romania and Bulgaria and decided for the formal decision on the accession of the two states to the Schengen area to be discussed on the occasion of EU Justice and Home Affairs Council of September 2011. A political support message was also sent by the European Parliament, giving, on 8 June 2011, a majority vote for the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen area.

The decision on the accession of Romania (and Bulgaria) to the Schengen area should have been adopted on the occasion of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 22 September 2011, but the opposition of Netherlands and Finland made this impossible.

The European Councils of 9 December 2011 and March 2012 confirmed once again the accomplishment of all the conditions for the adoption of the decision on the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen area and invited the JHA Council to formally complete this process, by taking a decision in two stages (*first, the lifting of air and maritime internal borders controls and, then, eliminating the internal land border controls*).

At the same time, in the spirit of the European Council Conclusions of March 2012, the Romanian authorities have implemented a series of complementary measures, destined to consolidate the Member States' confidence, thus demonstrating a constructive and open attitude towards the completion of the accession process.

Understanding the complexity of the current European context, the Romanian authorities will keep on efficiently supporting all the initiatives which lead to strengthening the security of the freedom, security and justice area and implicitly of the European citizens. In order to work out a

⁴ New Eastern Europe, *Don't Write off Ukraine*, <http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/node/490>, last accessed on 5 November 2012

solution for the current situation, the key words are *open dialogue*, *honest cooperation*, *spirit of solidarity* in actions, not only in statements, and, last but not least, *mutual knowledge* manifested between Member States.

In all the activities we initiated, we permanently focus on the accomplishment of the objective related to the development of the area of justice, freedom and security and to the increase of the level of internal security for the European citizen. The results can be seen and have been openly appreciated by the representatives of Member States who have appraised the degree of preparation of our country within the Schengen appraisal process.

All of our actions regarding the cooperation in the Schengen context, including those concerning the border control and securization, are already the actions of a Member State. We have already got into the logic of a Schengen State and set up

a system allowing us to act beside our European colleagues.

What does Romania lack to become a Schengen State with full rights? Theoretically, nothing.

But, in practice, there is a lack of clear manifestation of the political will of the involved Member States and, for this reason, the accession of Romania to the Schengen area remains a desideratum for which we have to wait until March 2013.

Article drawn up by the Unit for European Policy Implementation within the General Directorate for European Affairs and International Relations - Romanian Ministry of Administration and Interior

In Focus

EIR – Associate Institute to the „European Global Strategy”

EIR has become an *associate institute* to the „*European Global Strategy*” initiative, aiming to generate new ideas and reflections about the strategic directions of the EU’s external relations. The initiative is led by four *think tanks* from Italy - Istituto di affari internazionali, Spain - Real Instituto Elcano, Poland - Polish Institute of International relations (PISM) and Sweden - Swedish Institute of International Affairs. Its goal is to bring into public debate research-generated ideas about the future of the EU’s external relations, through an active dialogue. These will be delivered through a series of instruments: publications, an interactive website, and workshops. The four organizing institutes will be responsible for producing a final report highlighting the essential elements of a strategic vision for EU external relations to be delivered in May 2013.



The „*European Global Strategy*” initiative was launched in July 2012, at the suggestion of the Foreign Affairs ministers of Sweden, Poland, Spain and Italy, starting from the idea that a new strategic thinking is needed in the current context. The project includes the organisation of seminars and conferences as well as an online debate platform. The process is an open one, as other centres and think-tanks interested in the proposed topic have the possibility to contribute with ideas as part of the initiative, as *associate members*.

The elaboration process of a „*European Global Strategy*” involves a large debate, through policy-oriented publications, scientific articles, editorials, an interactive internet website and a series of conferences.

As mentioned on the initiative website, the strategy is aiming at the consolidation of a common strategic culture at the European level, as well as a broadly shared long-term direction and vision. Through the series of conferences, workshops and publications, the four leading think-tanks aim to stimulate a broad debate on the future of European external relations. Currently, the EU has a security strategy, elaborated in 2003 and updated in 2008. The aim of the current initiative is to look beyond risks, towards opportunities, in the context of changes taking place in Europe and in the rest of the world. The finality of the project is to contribute to the formulation of a future European global strategy, developed by European institutes, with the participation of the High Representative and of the European External Action Service.

More details about the background, participants, planned events and relevant publications are available on the project website: <http://www.europeanglobalstrategy.eu/>.

Agnes Nicolescu

Romanian Journal of European Affairs - Winter Issue 2012

In the fourth issue of this year's RJE, the contributors bring forward topics related to the EU's ability to develop capabilities for civilian crisis management, the theory of political monetary (dis)integration, a conceptual assessment of the *United States of Europe*, the cultural foundations of autocracy, an assessment of the Romanian economy's eco-efficiency and the Roma as a protected minority - policies and best practices in the EU.

Rafal Domisiewicz, PhD, counsellor in the Polish Foreign Ministry, at present seconded to the European External Action Service HQ in Brussels, talks about the civilian crisis management, long considered an EU *forte*. He investigates how the EU has fared in building civilian capabilities for CSDP through a case study of the impact of the Europeanization of CCM norms in one of the newer EU member states - Poland. He finds that Europeanisation has had a limited and shallow impact on the civilian response capability-building in Poland, featuring adjustments on the margins rather than the core of the security policy.

Radu Cristian Muşetescu (PhD, reader) and **Octavian-Dragomir Jora** (PhD, lecturer) in the Department of International Business and Economics, Bucharest University of Economics discuss upon the theory of political monetary (dis) integration, drawing a minority report from the perspective of Austrian economics. Political economists and policy makers are increasingly interested in the issue of monetary disintegration. Until recently, the process through which two states that previously shared a common currency decide to abandon it and choose national currencies instead was a marginal and accidental event in history. It was met in the case of political disintegration of state constructions such as Czechoslovakia, Soviet Union or Yugoslavia, typically built through military aggression and experiencing widespread economic planning. Today, world may experience another type of monetary disintegration. In this case, it is the result of a deep economic crisis affecting the democratic process of integration in Western Europe. The difficulties experienced by some of the member states of the Euro-zone as well as the debate around the correct path towards solving them have put forward the scenario that at least some of these countries will abandon their membership of the European Monetary System. The hallmark characteristic of these states is their open and predominantly market-oriented economies. Their return to a planned economy as well as complete isolation from the rest of the global and regional economy is highly improbable. But they have also a monetary system based on political money and massive wealth redistribution is possible through the monetary mechanism.

Florin Bonciu, PhD, University Professor, Vice-president for Research at the Romanian American University in Bucharest, Senior Researcher within the Institute for World Economy in



Bucharest, aims to analyze in his article the concept of *United States of Europe* from the point of view of previous historical attempts to unite the European state entities, as well as from the point of view of a comparative analysis with the United States of America. In order to establish a very clear framework of analysis, from the very beginning some possible errors of reasoning are presented. As result of the analysis, the conclusion is that a true European federation of states is very unlikely to materialize in the foreseeable future while some elements of a federal construction are still possible. Another conclusion is that a partial federal construction is not effective; on the contrary, it is prone to generate disequilibrium.

Iulian Oneaşcă, expert in social reforms and policies, presently working at the European Institute of Romania, examines in his article the foundations of the societies in Central Asia (CA) and their impact on politics, recalling similarities with Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), making recommendations for the societies' advancement. He analyzes the connections between cultural heritage and politics, introducing two pillar concepts, the societies' cultural and institutional foundations. Then, he inspects the social capital and the exercise of power, illustrating beneficial associations and trade-offs between culture(s) and politics. Shortages are exposed and opportunities and circumstances for conflicts revealed. The author substantiates the contradictory impacts of the international arena; he tackles synergies and discusses means to combine influences between politics and cultures. Finally, he incorporates findings into policy terms. The rudiments of a working system to foster progress in CA are seen in developments of both individuals and their governance systems. Recommendations are made with regard to how Higher Education Institutions can dodge flawed cultural influences and amend autocracy. The issues of CA societies are addressed with a strong policy focus, making policy recommendations and aiming at rising debates.

Viorel Niţă, researcher within the Institute of World Economy, presently holding a postdoctoral research position within the Sustainability Assessment Unit of the Institute of Environment and Sustainability, Joint Research Center, European Commission, assesses in his paper the ecological sustainability of the Romanian economy from three different angles. The first two applications use the economy's energy and material consumption as proxy for its overall environmental impact. The third assessment approach is a qualitative and context-based one: the main obstacles to and opportunities for incorporating sustainability-competitiveness synergies into the Romanian industrial firms' management are identified. The predominance of competitive advantages based on low labour costs, high potential of increasing labour productivity, deficient environmental and industrial policies and lack of awareness in both business and policy environment as to the beneficial role of resource productivity increase constitute

significant obstacles to adopting competitive sustainability strategies. Fortunately, the relatively low levels of eco-efficiency and eco-innovation in industry offer in fact a wide scope of still unexploited win-win solutions. On the basis of the results, further research directions are sketched and several desirable public policy actions for enhancing the ecological sustainability of the Romanian economy are put forward.

Sigrid Lipott, PhD in Transborder Policies, currently teaching assistant at the University of Trieste, refers in her article to the Roma people as one of the most heterogeneous minority groups in Europe, encompassing a broad variety of cultural traits and linguistic diversity, resulting in numerous sub-groups and fragmented identities. The most recent developments at European level show an increasing willingness to adopt minority rights documents directed to autochthonous minorities. This has provided also the Roma,

or part of them, with opportunities to be granted effective protection with support in the rights-based approach. The paper focuses on the issue of Roma minority protection in the EU. It introduces some key features present in the debate regarding Roma minorities, highlighting the in-group diversity; it then analyzes the different legal status of the Roma communities in the EU, highlighting the importance of a framework instrument for the protection of territorial minorities at a macro-regional level. The article offers an overview on the European Roma policy, looking at some best practices in Europe as far as protection of Roma is concerned (Slovenia and Sweden).

Full articles are available on www.ier.ro/rjea. For the printed copy, please contact sales-rjea@ier.ro.

Oana Mocanu

European Court of Human Rights Reports – recent cases against Romania

We are pleased to inform you about the issue of the third volume of the *European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) Reports - recent cases against Romania*.

The *ECHR Reports* contains a series of 34 resolutions of the European Court of Human Rights and targets both law theoreticians and practitioners, as well as those interested in knowing the resolutions of the Strasbourg court pronounced against Romania or those interested in the human rights matters, in general.

The *ECHR Reports* contains resolutions pronounced during January 2011 - June 2012 and tackles various issues, such as the right to life, the right to liberty and security, the right to freedom of expression, the right to respect for private and family life, the right to a fair trial, the right to an effective remedy etc.

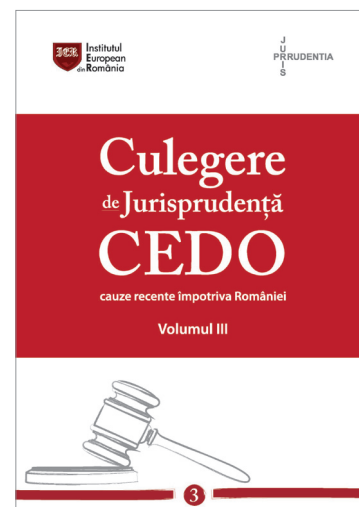
A particular attention was paid to the case law dealing with certain issues specific to the Romanian law, such as revoking the pardon decree, measures necessary to restore budget neutrality, the denial to appoint a trainee prosecutor.

The publication is a useful instrument for interpreting and correctly implementing the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms not only due to the judgments selected, but also due to the alphabetic index on matters, articles, key words, collocations, national and international legal institutions.

Given the increase in the number of applications that the European Court has to solve, we hope that the third tome of the *ECHR Reports - recent cases against Romania* will contribute both to a better knowledge of the ECHR case law, as well as to a better implementation of the standards of the Convention, thus preventing possible breaches of the human rights.

To purchase this publication, please send a request to the address: sales@ier.ro.

Laura Mihăilescu



The European Parliament: Plenary Session 19 – 22 November, Strasbourg

During 19-22 November 2012, the plenary session of the European Parliament took place in Strasbourg. Subjects such as the long term budget of the EU and the 2014 European elections dominated the agenda.

The session was launched on *Monday, 19 November*, by EP President Martin Schulz who made references to the worsening of the Israel - Hamas conflict and to the ending of the hunger strike by the Kurds imprisoned in Turkey.

One of the main reports presented on *Monday* targeted the **shadow banking system**. The report was prepared by the Belgian deputy, Saïd El Khadraoui, who addressed the necessity for more regulation and transparency of the system, for a better management of systemic risk, which can strongly affect the European banks if it's not properly controlled. **The necessity to increase the minors' protection in the digital world** was another topic of Monday's discussion.

On *Tuesday, 20 November*, the MEPS voted for the **introduction of new rules for all motorized vehicles**, rules meant to decrease the rate of motorbikes accidents by ensuring a stricter control on their safety. On the same day, a resolution concerning the **necessity of enhanced accountability in the consolidation of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)** was adopted. It was suggested that greater involvement at national level is needed. The resolution also proposed the adoption of a social pact by the EMU that would tackle job related problems, pact that would complement the adjustments that will be introduced in the EU treaties.

In the context of the European Council Summit between 22 - 23 November, the MEPs debated on the **EU budget for 2014-2020**, on *Wednesday, 21 November*. The debate was attended by the Cyprus Presidency of the European Council and the European Commission. The European Council's suggestion of reducing the budget proposed by the EC was vividly discussed. The MEPs expressed their concerns regarding the negative consequences that such a measure would have on the EU financed programmes. Through their statements, the leaders of the European parties backed José Manuel Durão Barroso's position, the EC President arguing that "a little difference in the EU budget makes a massive difference for the people depending on EU programmes". The **2012 and 2013 budgets** were also tackled, President Martin Schulz asking the member



Source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/european_parliament/

states that blocked the budgetary talks the previous week to avoid pushing the EU in a budgetary deadlock.

On the same day, **Tonio Berg's application** for the public health and consumer protection Commissioner portfolio was backed by the EP, through a positive outcome of the vote.

The **2014 European elections** topic dominated the agenda on *Thursday, 22 November*, when a resolution proposing more citizens' involvement in the election of Commission members was proposed. It was suggested that more Commissioners from the future EC should be members of the forthcoming European Parliament. Moreover, it was suggested that the European parties should propose candidates for the Presidency of the EC. The possibility of designating two candidates for the Commissioner post by each Member State - a female and a male- to consolidate gender equality, was further discussed. The **situations in Libya, Iran and Burma**, where fundamental human rights breaching was reported, were also addressed on *Thursday*.

For more details, please visit:

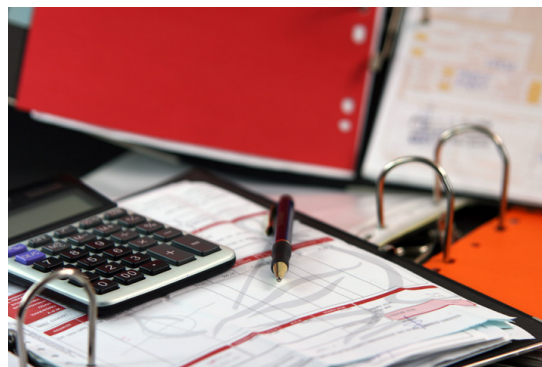
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/press-release/plenary>

Alexandra Pop, intern

The European Council Postponed the Adoption of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014 – 2020

The European Council of November 22 and 23, 2012, convened for the adoption of the EU budget for 2014 - 2020, ended undecided. The Statement by the Members of the European Council highlights, with a note of optimism, "a sufficient degree of potential convergence to make an agreement possible" on MFF in the beginning of 2013. The 27 Heads of State and Government gave "its President the mandate together with the President of the European Commission to continue the work and pursue consultations" to identify a consensus.

Negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) address the European budget priorities for 2014-2020. MFF goes beyond finances, setting the upper limit of EU spending, defining programmes on what the money should be spent and the rules on how the expenditure should be financed. The new MFF is in negotiations since July 2011, after the Commission presented its proposal. The Commission's MFF package includes the MFF Regulation, five legislative acts on EU own resources and approx. 70 specific-sectoral proposals. In the MFF negotiation, the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament participate, each with its own contribution.



Source: <http://www.sxc.hu>

MFF 2014-2020 has two versions of reference. One, of budget increase, is endorsed by the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso. It refers to the Europe 2020 strategy, the strengthening of convergence and European solidarity, emphasizing investments for growth and jobs. A potential reduction in structural funds affects Member States. The preservation of jobs and the promotion of fiscal consolidation and structural reforms would be jeopardized in most of the new Member States. At the same time, the economies of the major contributing Member States, recovering more than 50% of the structural funds allocated to cohesion countries, would also be affected by reductions in financing. A second proposal, of MFF budget reduction, is endorsed by the President of European Council, Herman Van Rompuy. It follows the example of measures taken by States, of expenditure moderation due to budgetary constraints. The proposal is oriented to the future, allocating 50% more funds than the previous financial framework for competitiveness and jobs. What both proposals share is a focus on putting Europe back on the path of economic recovery and jobs generating growth.

The European Council negotiations seemed to lead to an approximation of the two streams. Therefore, the President of the Council advanced a new proposal. "It keeps the budget's overall total at a stable level" and, although it is 80 billion euro below the Commission proposal, takes account of national positions and includes increases in agriculture and cohesion funds.

It remains to be seen whether further dialogue will lead to a constructive compromise. Earlier, in 2005, the success came in the second round of negotiations.

Julian Oneașcă

event

"European Perspectives" Debate Series – EU Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges

The Representation of the European Commission in Romania organized, on 20 November 2012, a debate entitled: *EU Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges*. The event was logistically prepared by the Communication and Marketing Unit of the European Institute of Romania, under a contract that involves providing technical assistance for the organisation of two national conferences and ten monthly round tables for the Representation of the European Commission (REC) in Romania

The debate is part of the *European Perspectives* monthly series, launched by the Representation of the European Commission in 2009, with the aim of stimulating debate on EU's priorities and reflecting Romania's national public agenda.

The event was moderated by Mr. Cristian Ghinea, director of the Romanian Centre for European Policies and was attended by Mr. Nicolae Idu, Head of Representation of the European Commission in Romania, Mr. Wenceslas de Lobkowicz, advisor to the Directorate dealing with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo issues, European Commission, H.E. Andrea Gustović-Ercegovac, ambassador of Croatia in Romania, Liliana Popescu, professor, vice rector of National School of Political Science and Public Administration, Bucharest.



We will further present some of the topics discussed during the debate (all of the subjects tackled by the speakers can be found in the event summary, fully available on the EIR website, under the **Communication and Marketing/ Communication projects** section).

In his opening remark, Mr. Nicolae Idu highlighted the opportunity to organize this debate, considering the success enjoyed by the EU enlargement project, which, in a context dominated by debates on the economic and financial crisis,

will receive a new Member State, namely Croatia. The forthcoming accession of Croatia to the EU in the current difficult context proves the engagement of the European Union as far as further enlargement is concerned.

The moderator of the event, Mr. **Ghinea**, pointed out that in spite of the sceptical voices addressing the European Union, the Western Balkans states as well as those from the EU's eastern neighbourhood are still eager to join the European Union.

Mr. **Wenceslas de Lobkowicz** presented the status of the EU enlargement process, considered to be one of the most successful of the EU policies. The European Union will continue to put effort in coping with the challenges resulting from the ending of the civil conflicts from the Western Balkans. The guest presented the four state categories targeted by the EU enlargement: states that have concluded the negotiations (Croatia), states engaged in accession negotiations (Turkey, Iceland and Montenegro), candidate states that haven't started the negotiations yet (FYROM, Serbia) and potential candidates (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo). The EU enlargement package, adopted on 10 October 2012, includes nine documents of the European Commission. Beside the strategy document, Mr. **Wenceslas de Lobkowicz** briefly presented the six progress reports concerning the states from the expansion area as well as the monitoring report regarding Croatia and the Kosovo feasibility study. The messages conveyed by this set of documents is essential, as they refer to EU's strong commitment to continue the expansion process, but also to the fact that the EU enlargement process represents the main incentive to implement and continue the necessary reforms in the countries of interest.

H.E. **Andrea Gustović-Ercegovac** stressed the fact that the EU enlargement process is continuing the unification of the continent. Talking about the Croatian experience,

Her Excellency showed that the accession is successfully completing, after facing a long and challenging road. The process brought stability and peace, created strong institutions and also contributed to the modernization of the state. Croatia enjoyed a solid pro-EU consensus in the political arena, which ensured the continuation of reforms after the signing of the Accession Treaty in December 2011. Croatia's accession to the EU, scheduled to take place on the 1st of July 2013, represents a natural historical process of carrying on with the enlargement waves.

Ms. **Liliana Popescu** began her intervention by mentioning the benefits implied by the EU accession, saying that the recent EU enlargement strategy proves the renewed consensus of the Member States for further expansion, as an instrument of stability and security at European level. Referring to the EU enlargement strategy, Ms. **Popescu** brought into discussion the differences of opinion existing among the Member States regarding the status of Kosovo and addressed the audience the provocative question whether the EU is in fact ready to receive within its borders more states from the Southern half of the continent.

The main session was followed by questions and comments from the audience, aimed at deepening some of the issues addressed during the presentations, including EU's relations with states such as Turkey or the Republic of Moldova, and the differences between the EU enlargement policy and the European Neighbourhood Policy.

More information on the event can be accessed on the web page of the European Commission Representation in Romania:

http://ec.europa.eu/romania/eu_romania/perspective_europene/12112012_perspective_europene_extindere_ue_ro.htm

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