

**EU-ROMANIA
JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE**

21st Meeting

9-10 October 2006

Brussels

**DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
(adopted on 10 October 2006)**

**SMZ/DM/pel
*10 October 2006***

[FdR]

PE

EN

EN

The EU-Romania Joint Parliamentary Committee held its 21st meeting in Brussels on 9 and 10 October 2006 under the joint chairmanship of Mr Guido PODESTÀ, for the European Parliament, and Mr Viorel HREBENCIUC, for the Romanian Parliament.

The committee held an exchange of views with:

- Mr Mihai Razvan UNGUREANU, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Romanian Government and Mrs Anca BOAGIU, Minister for European Integration,
- Mrs Merja LINDROOS-BINHAM, Director, Unit for EU Enlargement, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, on behalf of the Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union,
- Mr Wenceslav De LOBKOWICZ, Head of Unit at Directorate General Enlargement, on behalf of the European Commission.

The members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee discussed the following subjects:

- On the basis of the Commission's Monitoring Report of 26 September 2006, Romania's accession to the EU: programme of the Romanian Government for fulfilling the benchmarks listed by the EC and accompanying and verification measures
- Concrete implementation of the political criteria and of the *acquis communautaire* and measures for consolidation and sustainability of results achieved, with a view, for example, to the judicial reform and fight against crime
- Concrete implementation of the economic criteria and of the *acquis communautaire* and measures for further improvement of results achieved, with a view, for example, to consolidation of economic growth and social rights in Romania
- Irreversibility and development of reforms and Romanian policies on
 - anti-corruption
 - child protection
 - integration of minorities
 - management of mental handicap
 - property restitution
- Romania's profile as European Union member state: priorities of Romania in the field of foreign policy, with a particular view to regional co-operation; programmes of the Romanian Government for information and communication on Europe

Pursuant to Rule 5 of its Rules of Procedure and Article 112 of the EU-Romania Association Agreement, the Joint Parliamentary Committee addressed the following recommendations to the Association Council, the Romanian institutions and the European institutions:

On accession of Romania to the EU, the JPC:

1. Expresses its deep satisfaction for the fact that, as it emerges from the European Commission's Monitoring Report and the debate in the European Parliament of 26 September 2006 and on the basis of progress made by the country, Romania will become a fully fledged

Member of the EU on 1 January 2007; stresses that this event constitutes a historical achievement and a political milestone for both Romania and the EU;

2. Is pleased to observe that the energetic action of the Romanian authorities in the recent months towards meeting the requirements for achieving full EU membership has been fairly reflected in the Commission's Monitoring Report of 26 September 2006;

3. Welcomes the national ratifications of the Treaty of Accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the European Union which have already taken place, and calls on the Member States that have not completed their procedures yet, to proceed without delay with the ratification of the Accession Treaty, in order to allow, next 14-15 December 2006, the European Council to welcome Romania as new Member as from 1st January 2007;

4. Points out that the European Commission is continuing its support and monitoring of Romania's preparations for accession, and that in particular it will establish a mechanism, based on Art. 37 and 38 of the Act of Accession, to co-operate and verify progress in the areas of justice and the fight against corruption, functioning through benchmarks to be addressed; warmly encourages the Romanian Government to abide by these commitments and looks forward to Commission's Report in June 2007 with confidence that safeguard measures will not be necessary; endorses the conclusions of the last European Commission Monitoring Report and takes note of the European Commission's Regulation No.(EC) 1423/2006 of 26 September 2006;

On the political criteria, the JPC:

5. Welcomes the progress made and strongly encourages Romania to continue the judiciary, public administration and civil service reforms, the fight against corruption, the improvement of the situation of people with disabilities and those suffering from mental illnesses, as well as the protection and integration of minorities;

6. Regarding the reform of the judicial system, notes with satisfaction progress made in the field of unification of interpretation and application of the law, which needs to be continued energetically, improvements in ensuring staffing levels and workload distribution, and the improvement of overall working conditions in the courts, in particular with regard to refurbishment and IT equipment; encourages the competent authorities to tackle more resolutely the problem of potential conflicts of interest and ethical issues in the Superior Council of the Magistracy and to help strengthening the Superior Council of the Magistracy's role in modernising management of courts and prosecution;

7. With regard to corruption, welcomes the fact that the new National Anti-Corruption Directorate has been able to achieve effective results in the prosecution of corruption offences, including those of high level corruption, and the new legislation on financing of political parties; calls for immediate translation of political will into facts to demonstrate the sustainability and irreversibility of recent positive progress, including in the local administration;

8. Underlines the importance to ensure the sustainability of the public administration reform; welcomes all the steps already taken in this regard and ongoing preparations for decentralisation of responsibilities and resource management;

9. Points out that the conditions in which people with disabilities, including children, have access to services, employment and education , are in several cases inadequate and calls on the government to continue resolutely along the path of reform on which it has already embarked; with regard to mental health, recommends that the competent authorities step up their efforts for improving treatment of patients and overall implementation of the sector's reform;

10. Reiterates its encouragement to the Romanian authorities to carefully implement the action plan aimed at assisting mothers in order to prevent child abandonment, providing sufficient social assistance for mothers in difficulty during pregnancy and adequate access of mothers to maternity hospitals;

11. Looks forward to completion of the legislative process of the law on the statute of national minorities in the light of non discrimination policy of the EU; encourages Romania to take into account the last resolutions of the European Parliament on Romania, including those parts dealing with minority rights; encourages Romania to focus on effective implementation of its strategy for the Roma on the ground, and especially at the local level, by improving social inclusion, preventing the improper use of force by the law enforcement bodies and strengthening the structures to favour access of the Roma to housing, health care, labour market and vocational training;

12. Continues to request, with regard to the restitution of property, that steps be taken to accelerate the restitution procedures;

On the economic situation, the JPC:

13. Notes with satisfaction that Romania has maintained its macroeconomic stability, continues to be a functioning market economy and has made the necessary progress enabling it to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the European Union; nevertheless, considers it necessary to stress that the Commission's monitoring report indicates various aspects that require continuous attention, and namely the reform of the public expenditure system, the strengthening of tax revenue mechanisms, the pursuit of restructuring and improvement of privatisation achievements;

On Romania's profile as new EU Member State and the future of Europe, the JPC:

14. Calls on Romania to fully assume its responsibilities, as a large and important new Member State, in the field of the European Foreign and Security Policy, including alignment with EU positions, and in the field of Justice and Home Affairs policies, also taking into account the challenges facing the region to which Romania belongs; the JPC encourages Romania to take its natural place as the future EU linkage for creating good neighbour relations;

15. Expresses the confidence that Romania will take an active part in the debates on the future of Europe contributing to the development of the best possible constitutional framework for the enlarged Union; commends ratification by Romania of the Constitutional Treaty on the occasion of the ratification of the Accession Treaty; welcomes the consistent efforts of the Romanian Government to inform public opinion on matters regarding European integration;

16. To improve perception and understanding, by the EU and Romanian citizens, of the advantages and obligations of Romanian membership in the EU, and to combat scepticism or mistrust towards the EU, or towards EU enlargement, considers it extremely important that the EU carries out a consistent and long-term information policy in all the Member States, corroborated also by an enhancement of the communication policy initiated by the Romanian Government, underlining that reunification of Europe will extend the area of peace, prosperity and security throughout the continent;

17. Considers that Romania, through its specific experiences, will be able to add new perspectives to the process of European integration, and its accession will have a positive impact on the development and cohesion of the European Union;

18. At the conclusion of its works, and looking back on the activity carried out in the period 1995-2006, the Joint Parliamentary Committee EU-Romania is pleased to confirm the fundamental importance of inter-parliamentary dialogue which allows improving mutual understanding and comprehension of ambitions and problems of a country, including their causes, their size and possible solutions; stresses that parliamentary debate and publicity are more than ever necessary when it comes to the enlargement of the European Union, to democratise a negotiation process which can be characterised by technicalities which hardly can be explained to citizens;

19. Expresses its members' wish to participate in a friendship group after the accession of Romania to the EU in the framework of the European Parliament. The JPC wishes Romania and its citizens every success with the full integration into the European Union.

* * * *