

THE FUTURE EUROPEAN UNION: A ROMANIAN VISION (GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA, JUNE 26, 2001)

For Romania, the accession process to the EU is more than fulfilling a number of criteria and negotiating various chapters of the *acquis*. By joining the EU, we aim at becoming full participants in a model of society and civilisation that makes Europe distinctive in the world. Romanians have always been connected to this model, at least spiritually; they believe, however, that by becoming citizens of an enlarged European Union, they will have a better opportunity to contribute to the development and the enrichment of the heritage of this turmoiled, yet increasingly prosperous continent.

We discuss a lot about strengthening the Union, making its particular institutions more efficient and bringing it closer to its citizens. To a certain extent, these can be regarded as fundamental objectives of the EU. Romania believes that the question of defining the ultimate goal of the Union, which poses certain difficulties and risks for the current debate, coincides more or less with agreeing on the fundamentals or *les raisons d'être* of the European construction from now on.

We believe that as a consequence of the new international context, Europe is called to deliver more at the global level and to assume greater responsibilities in the world. This appears to be the main *raison d'être* of the Union for the next generations. Unlike in the past, in the future, the EU will have to focus to an equal extent on external affairs, be they in the area of security and defence, in that of the economy and trade or in development. This would evolve in synergy with the process of creating the most dynamic and modern economy in the world by the next decade. This implies, of course, a re-united Europe, a Europe whole and free.

What the European Union has to offer to the world is mainly its own model of a society and civilisation, based on diversity, freedom and solidarity. The means through which the EU can promote its identity and the values of this model are the Political Union and the Economic and Monetary Union.

Romania is in favour of a deeper political integration advancing both inwards and outwards. Romania wants to join an area of commonly shared values, such as democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, assessed through the same standards and criteria. The future European Union should be a Union closer to its citizens, non-discriminatory and all-inclusive. We favour, in principle, the improvement of the instruments in the field of the rights of the citizen, considering that this might avoid discriminations or divisions in the future among citizens of the same Union. The Charter on Fundamental Rights is a promising platform for providing greater coherence of the instruments in this field. A Union closer to its citizens also means the implementation of a common space of freedom, security and justice, shared by all citizens, in an environment that is safe and secure.

Finally, Europe is and must remain a continent of cultural diversity. Cultural and national diversity is at the heart of the European development, it is a reality of the present and of the coming generations. Europe should protect its cultural richness in harmony with the needs of technological progress and the challenges of globalization. Romanians, who managed to preserve their Latin culture and traditions, have a particular pride in defending cultural diversity.

We would like to join a Union that is internationally active and highly visible in the world. We believe that CFSP and its ESDP component will represent the area where Romania will have a meaningful contribution in the future.

In asking ourselves the question 'What kind of an enlarged Union do we want in the next decade?' the logical answer will be a Union that projects stability (e.g. in Western Balkans), prosperity (e.g. in the former Soviet Union) and cultural and religious tolerance (with the Arab world) in its neighbourhood and even further. Candidate countries have an important role in fulfilling this fundamental objective, thanks to their location and historical background. EU is, at the same time, a regional power as well as a global power. Europe should remain faithful to its particular methods of promoting its values, through preventive actions (greater focus on development and trade – the biggest donor-, multilateralism – interest in UN - and inclusiveness – ACP Agreements).

Romania applied for membership to the EU at a time when the first consequences of the Maastricht Treaty had not yet appeared. Since then, the Internal Market expanded considerably, the Euro is about to become a reality in the pockets of European citizens. The European economy performs better than ever. We have therefore a stronger argument for becoming Members of such a Union.

Now that the Lisbon Summit conclusions have become a cornerstone in EU's economic and social evolution, Romania believes that Europe could take stock of the specifics of its unique economic and social model so as to become the most dynamic and modern economy in the world in the next decade. The recent meeting of the European Council in Gothenburg has completed the triangle of involvement of candidate countries in the Lisbon strategy by adding environment (sustainable development strategy) and knowledge (e-Europe) to economic and financial affairs (Pre-Accession Programmes) and employment and social affairs (Luxembourg strategic guidelines), the four pillars of the European economic and social model.

Thus, focus should be put on four main priorities: economic performance, social solidarity and social inclusion, economic cohesion and solidarity among Member States and investing more in and better rewarding knowledge.

All of the above require internal reforms, not only in institutional terms (partially solved in Nice), but also in constitutional terms. Romania agrees with the majority of views that the core element in the constitutional approach will be the decision making process in the Union and, in particular, the delimitation of prerogative between the national and Community level. Four principles are essential for launching debates on this issue:

Any debates should first take stock of the realities of the present, which show that European citizens, to whom the whole exercise is devoted, still have strong feelings for their national identity and a deep attachment to their own State. National interests still represent a reality in the day-to-day business of the European Union. However, we do not exclude the federal model, built on the Community method, which from many points of view is proving into reality and may be beneficial for us as a future Member State. We should not forget that in many parts of Europe a radical change of the structure of the Union might cause rejection. We have to look for an in-between formula that is mutually respectful of all individual identities, of solidarity between citizens from all around the EU and of a trans-national bond between European nations, removing all historical prejudices.

Safeguarding, where possible and feasible, of what has already been acquired by the Community method. In this respect, the new EU citizens should enjoy the benefits of the common policies like most of their counterparts in the current Union for decades.

Supporting reinforced cooperation arrangements, their extension to other areas and providing full transparency of such schemes. Member States outside such arrangements must be granted the opportunity of joining at a later stage, under very clear conditions. As well, enlargement of the EU should lead to a higher minimal threshold for a closer cooperation arrangement;

Clear definitions and procedures through which a certain area of national competence can evolve to Community competence and vice-versa. Confusions on competencies should be avoided.

We regard in the same light the question of the European Constitution or, perhaps, the Constitutional Treaty. This will be a politically delicate and technically challenging exercise. The Institute of Florence has laid down some pertinent principles and promising proposals for the future discussions. Romania can support the idea of a common legal foundation of the Union, which lays down the basics about the EU, including a clear procedure for further amendments. Such a Constitution should be revised only after general and direct consultation of the EU citizens. The results of the Irish referendum prove the validity of this approach. The secondary Treaty or Treaties that would result after such a streamlining and comprising the bulk of the acquis might have a different procedure for review. We want that by streamlining the Treaties, the acquis does not diminish in substance, namely the common policies are not affected. We also support a deeper involvement of national Parliaments in European Affairs, since the Maastricht Treaty has led to the creation of Community institutions for representatives of the regions and social partners. A parliamentary institution of this type can be very valuable in providing an improved balance between the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers for those areas pertaining to Inter-Governmental cooperation (CFSP-ESDP, for instance). Such an institution may become responsible for ratifying further amendments to the secondary Treaty or Treaties.

Romania considers that the preparation of the next IGC should also focus on the instruments for external actions and the geographical limits of the EU. In this connection, Romania would see merit for such a debate to contribute to the definition of a strategic approach of the Union towards its future Eastern neighbour, the Republic of Moldova. The inclusion of this country among the participants in the European Conference is an important first step towards its more substantial involvement in the general European Conference.

On the decision making process, it is true that a progressive Community approach towards CFSP may seem promising, now looking back at what the Community has achieved in the past 50 years. We support an extension of enhanced cooperation method under the First and Third Pillars. In the past decades, the Union became wider and more profound. It needs different 'driving engines' to push the Union ahead in different areas. Enhanced cooperation is beneficial in the EMU. The situation in the Second Pillar is a bit different, as the Nice Treaty has proven. Structurally, while enhanced cooperation should be applied to the full possible extent in this pillar, the inter-governmental method in this area ensures that the actions conceived in foreign policy are the outcome of internal negotiations. There is no dominant trend in the EU; on the contrary, Member States, particularly the small and

medium ones, seem to be focused on specific areas of foreign policy where they have tradition, knowledge and specific interests. This type of foreign policy making avoids any use of the traditional balance of power instruments, as it was the case in the history. This was obvious in the Balkans. These important assets are part of the political identity of the EU.

As far as the decision making process is concerned, we do not oppose de plano the extension of the qualified majority voting procedure in CFSP since in many areas this may prove a wise step. But we want to secure a strong position of Romania in this area, commensurate with its dimension and population.

In Romania, a debate is under way on the future shape of the Union and on the place to be occupied by Romania in this evolving entity. Like in all Member States, the discussions go well beyond the framework established by the Declaration of Nice. We aim at gathering quality contributions from different parts of our society. We intend to come up with a national vision on Europe before the European Council in Laeken and to further elaborate on a national position starting as of next year. For the time being, we will put forward some preliminary results of our internal discussions and some reflections on the different proposals made recently on this topic.

As far as the organization of the debate is concerned, Romania believes that the results of the current reflection phase have to be taken up by a Convention-type arrangement, covering a wide range of segments of the European society. It is important for Romania to participate at least as an observer in the activities of such a Convention and not just to be briefed as last year in the case of the Charter on Fundamental Rights. Romania also shares the view that if such a Convention can prove to be very efficient in structuring and preparing the next IGC, it would be up to the representatives of the Governments to negotiate the future Treaty in the final stage, in 2004 and to open these negotiations for the participation of candidate countries as observers or full members, in the case of accession.

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