

COVER NOTE

from : Secretariat

to : Convention

Subject: **Report on National Debate on the future of Europe:
– Romania**

Members of the Convention will find attached the report on the national debate on the future of Europe taking place in Romania.

Romanian Delegation to the European Convention

Report on the progress of the national debate on the future of Europe

The Romanian authorities are engaged in a permanent dialogue with different layers of the civil society, think tanks, academic milieu, professional NGOs, local communities and youth organisations, in order to encourage and promote the national debate on the main topics and questions addressed by the Convention on the future of Europe.

This dialogue takes place via public debates, hearings, seminars and conferences, media and specialised interactive Internet sites (such as those of Ministry of European Integration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a site of the Romanian Delegation to the Convention - www.conventiaeuropena.ro).

The participation of both governmental officials and MPs in the TV and radio talk shows and interviews given to the media have also had a strong impact, spreading out information and relevant points of view on the European project.

The Romanian Parliament, aware of its role to enforce the link between the citizens and the political elites, got involved in the national debate on the future of Europe, trying to reach out as many spheres of the civil society as possible.

In March 2001, The Committee on European Integration together with the Committees for Foreign Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, drafted a project for the national debate on the future of Europe, providing a clear timetable, topics and the framework of the debates.

On 9th of May 2001, The Romanian Government initiated a national debate on the future of the European Union, starting from the assumption that the main beneficiary has to be the Romanian citizens, who should be consulted and involved in this debate that eventually might produce a blueprint highly relevant for their fundamental interests.

On the same event, the Romanian Senate issued a declaration, inviting all the political parties, NGOs, media and academic sphere to actively contribute to the debate on the future of Europe.

Further on, the Committee on European Integration of the Romanian Parliament drafted a questionnaire in order to provide guidelines for structuring the debate at the level of the political parties. Both MPs and government officials have participated to debates with the citizens, notably with the young people from universities and high schools, aiming to stimulate their interests / keep them involved on the current debate on the future of Europe and - not the least - to get their own perceptions on the topic.

As other European citizens, Romanians are interested to be informed on the institutional architecture of the Union they will join. Their vision, ideas, proposals, comments were collected, summarised and published by the Ministry of European Integration in the booklet **“The Future of Europe Seen by Romanian Citizens”**. Their points of view were collected directly from over 5000 questionnaires distributed in all the districts of the country, but also from interviews and e-mails sent to the Ministry of European Integration and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this respect, special links were created on the websites of the MEI (www.mie.ro) and MFA (www.mae.ro), available in English too.

In December 2001, as a result of the debate on these issues at academic level, the Ministry of European Integration collected and published the most relevant contributions in a book called **“Romania and the future of the European Union”**.

Starting with February 2002, a new phase of the debate was launched aiming to obtain more focused and structured answers to the 64 very concrete questions on the future of Europe. On February 21st, the Romanian Parliament, together with the Ministry of European Integration and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organized a national debate on the future of Europe, gathering representatives of the Delegation of the European Commission, ambassadors of EU Member States and Candidate Countries, MPs, representatives of the Romanian government and other public institutions, as well as representatives of the civil society, academic sphere, professional and youth organisations.

The main themes of the debates both at central and local level were: European governance, delimitation of competences between the Union and the Member States, European single currency, role of the national parliaments in the EU institutional architecture, contribution of the civil society, young people and the future of Europe, EU political identity, EU constitutional Treaty, Romania's place in the EU, Charter of Fundamental Rights and the EU Treaty.

The participants to the national debate come from the most various spheres of the Romanian society: academics, business men, trade unions, employers' organizations, NGOs. There have been debates with young people as well as with the elders and representatives of the retired people associations.

Most of the debates – involving foreign guests (politicians, academics and representatives of prestigious NGOs) - were organized under the aegis of the Ministry of European Integration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romanian Parliament, European Institute and some NGOs, such as “Eurisc” and “Open Society Institute”.

In 2002, Europe's Day was celebrated by large debates, conferences, seminars, exhibitions on the future of Europe held in Bucharest and many Romanian counties: Cluj, Timis, Tulcea, Teleorman, Zalau, Arges, Brasov, Constanta, Caras Severin and Iasi. In this respect, a special mention can be made for the exhibition organized at the headquarters of the Ministry of European Integration, with children paintings showing how they imagine the enlarged Europe.

Last but not the least, the national selection for the Youth Convention to be launched in Brussels on 9th of July – organised by the Ministry of European Integration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Romanian Parliament - offered the opportunity of a high level debate on the European Convention topics involving hundreds of young people representing Romanian research institutes, universities and colleges.

Conclusions of the national debate

- The national debate focussed more on the general philosophy of the European Union, rather than on the technical aspects. The Romanian society is generally enthusiastic and considers the European integration as a vehicle for its economic and social emancipation and an opportunity to get involved in a common cultural space that it belongs to.
- Romanian citizens' view on the future Europe is that of an enlarged Union – a federation of nation states - preserving the national identity of the Member States and observing the right implementation of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.
- Europe cannot ignore the interests of its constitutive nations; their cultural identities must be preserved because their diversity represents one of the main assets of Europe.
- Romania supports the deepening of integration and the strengthening of the community method, while ensuring an increasing transparency and legitimacy of the whole system as such.
- Within the context of globalisation, a united Europe is perceived as a solution of the Member States' problems. The nation states can make the best use of their sovereignty, by jointly exercising it at a superior level, with the due respect for the preservation of the national identity.
- In this respect, the European citizen expects Europe to have a key role in international relations, and to actively participate in the shaping of the world global security.
- The involvement of the national parliaments and of the European Parliament in the European affairs represents a key prerequisite for the necessary legitimacy of the European project.
- The future of an enlarged European Union should be founded on the principles of solidarity and tolerance.
- The Romanian citizens have expressed their expectations for an enlarged Europe without internal frontiers and discrimination between the East and the West. They would like a genuine reunification of the European states and nations. In order to accomplish this fundamental goal, adequate instruments for prosperity transfer to the East, must be identified.

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