



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

STATEMENT

OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S ANNUAL ENLARGEMENT PACKAGE 2011

At a joint sitting, held on December 15, 2011, the **Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds** and the **Foreign Policy and Defence Committee** discussed the **European Commission's 2011 Annual Enlargement Package**, included as **item 62** of the Bulgarian Parliament Annual Working Programme on EU Affairs (2011).

Having discussed the Commission's Annual Enlargement Package, and in particular the *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012 COM (2011) 666 final*, the Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds and the Foreign Policy and Defence Committee **expressed their unanimous support for the following statement** which is to be sent to the EU institutions:

1. We are convinced that the enlargement process provides momentum for **reforms** in the enlargement countries and expands the area of stability, peace, democracy and prosperity for the EU. Stable Western Balkans means a stable Europe.

2. We consider enlargement to be one of the most important and **efficient instruments** of the EU for pursuing its **strategic interests**. It facilitates the achievement of the EU goals in a range of significant policy areas such as energy, transport, environmental protection, climate change mitigation, increased security.

3. It is our opinion that the **dynamism of the enlargement process should be maintained**. Following the signing of the Accession Treaty with Croatia, it is important to keep the enlargement focus on the EU agenda, along with efforts to overcome the aftermath of the global economic and financial crisis.

4. We believe that the topic of **deepening European integration** goes hand in hand with the topic of **EU enlargement**. An analysis of the previous **enlargements** of the European Community/the European Union can lead us to conclude that generally each enlargement has provided an impetus for the **development of integration**. In this connection, the new economic governance in the EU will demand that the European Commission strengthen its **monitoring of candidate countries' macroeconomic policies**. In that context, countries aspiring for EU membership will be expected to follow the strategic guidelines for EU economic governance, including by improving the business environment in order to overcome the economic crisis and achieve sustainable growth, and by pursuing the goals of the **Europe 2020** strategy.

5. We share the main Commission conclusions in its 2011 Annual Enlargement Policy Package. We welcome the strict adherence to **the principles of conditionality and own merits**.

6. We view positively the new approach proposed by the Commission to open a **dialogue on negotiating chapters on the judiciary and fundamental rights and on justice, freedom and security early in the negotiation process** in order to allow sufficient time for achievement of convincing track records.

7. We believe that regional cooperation underpinning reconciliation and integration into the EU should remain an essential element of the Stabilisation and Association process. This cooperation has shown further progress in a number of areas, yet certain stereotypes persist,

mostly relating to conflicts from the past, continuing to challenge stability on the Western Balkans.

8. We join in the recommendation suggesting that bilateral issues need to be solved by the parties concerned, with determination, in a **good neighbourly spirit** and taking into account overall EU interests. In view of the key importance of good neighbourly relations for the accession process, the use, in public statements, of negative qualifications about partners should be strongly condemned.

9. We believe that **the development of modern infrastructure** would help overcome physical barriers, improve accessibility and closeness, which would help **overcome existing stereotypes** and increase trust and the desire for sharing and mutual assistance among citizens in the region. In its turn, that will facilitate the development process and the European perspective, for political integration of Southeast European countries.

10. We acknowledge the progress made in the negotiation process with Western Balkan countries and Iceland. As an EU member-state and a country in Southeast Europe, Bulgaria will continue to yield consistent support for the process of European integration of countries in the region.

11. We believe that the integration of new countries should contribute not only to **their own stabilization but also to strengthening the EU**. In this connection, there is a need for a higher pace of adapting the policies of candidate countries to European standards and requirements, to ensure the simultaneous implementation of processes, transformation and integration, on their road to EU.

12. We believe that the success of enlargement depends not only on the act of enlargement itself but also on **the positive public opinion concerning the integration** of new member states. In this connection, we note the key role of **more active public awareness-raising and educating the citizens as to the need for enlargement**.