

(2003/C 280 E/071)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0588/03****by Miquel Mayol i Raynal (Verts/ALE) to the Council**

(28 February 2003)

*Subject:* Freedom of association in Romania

Following the reply of 27 June 2002 to my question E-1377/02<sup>(1)</sup>, in which the Commission states that freedom of association is covered by the Copenhagen criteria, new developments have occurred in Romania. The Bucharest Court of Appeal has just confirmed the decision to refuse registration to Romania's first regional party, the Liga Transilvania-Banat. The Court stated, *inter alia*, that regionalism and subsidiarity are principles that run counter to the unitary and indivisible character of the Romanian state.

Is the banning of a democratic political party compatible with the spirit of the accession criteria defined in Copenhagen? Does the Council intend to ask the Romanian authorities for an explanation?

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 28, 6.2.2003, p. 100.

**Reply**

(22 July 2003)

The Council recalls to the Honourable Member that Article 49 of the EU Treaty provides that any European State which respects the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law may apply to become a member of the European Union. Therefore the Council attaches the utmost importance to the respect, by the candidate countries, of the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. With regard to Romania, the Council notes that the Commission's 2002 Regular Report on Romania's progress towards accession concluded that, in general, Romania continued to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria. The report also stated, more specifically, that 'The Romanian Constitution provides for the freedom of association and the freedom of assembly. Both of these rights are respected in practice.'

The Council does not intend to comment on a specific ruling of a Romanian court, which, according to available information, can be further appealed both at other levels of the domestic judicial system and in relevant international fora such as the European Court of Human Rights. If it turns out that there has been a violation of the fundamental principles mentioned above, the European Union will, especially in the light of the Copenhagen criteria for accession, make the appropriate representations to the Romanian authorities, particularly within the framework of the bodies established by the European Agreement.

(2003/C 280 E/072)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0598/03****by Camilo Nogueira Román (Verts/ALE) to the Council**

(28 February 2003)

*Subject:* The EU and Brazil

What measures does the Council intend to take to strengthen relations with Brazil and Mercosur, following the recent election of President Luiz Inácio da Silva and the options for working together now opened up in his programme?

**Reply**

(21 July 2003)

1. The Council of the European Union, at the occasion of the election of President Luiz Inácio da Silva, had the opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to continue its excellent relations with Brazil and to further enhance political dialogue, trade relations and economic links with that country. At the same occasion, the Council expressed the EU's confidence in the strengthening of the Brazilian economy and its