



Political Report

The Romanian Government postponed the European Elections

by

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The Romanian Prime Minister – Calin Popescu Tariceanu has decided to postpone the elections for the European Parliament for the late autumn of this year.



In an extraordinary governmental session held on March 12th, the Prime Minister assumed the text of an emergency ordinance postponing the elections for the European Parliament.

Prime Minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu stated that he took this decision as a consequence of the internal political climate, which is improper for organizing elections of such great importance: “We do not have a serene atmosphere, clear of domestic policy topics, so the debates for the European Parliament cannot be held in a correct manner”.

Initially established for May 13th, the elections for the European Parliament have been postponed for the second half of the year, the exact day of the elections will be fixed later, after discussions with all the parliamentary parties.

According to the Accession Treaty that Romania has signed, the officials from Bucharest have to organize the European elections until the end of 2007.

- *The strong opposition of the head of the state and of the Democratic Party (PD) members of the cabinet remained without any echo and has only the meaning of a political gesture.*

During the governments' meeting, the PD members of the cabinet stood against the decision. Therefore the document followed the legal procedure without having the signature of the PD ministers responsible in organizing the elections and supervising the legal nature of the bill, respectively Vasile Blaga – the Minister of Internal Affairs and Monica Macovei – the Minister of Justice.

The announced intention of President Basescu to attend the extraordinary government meeting failed as PM Tariceanu found no constitutional ground for his presence at the meeting. So the President delivered his message against postponing the European elections in an informal consultation with the members of the cabinet, but obviously without any influence over the PM's decision.

- *Reactions of the political class*

President Traian Basescu considers that the PM's explanation suffers from the lack of arguments' validity and reiterated his attempt to alleviate political tensions by offering not to call for a referendum for „uninominal vote“ before May 13 this year, in order for the European elections to be organized as planned.

The Democratic Party remains constant in finding no realistic – political or technical arguments for deferring the EP elections and urges the PM to assume responsibility for the political crisis that he generated by taking this decision unilaterally.

Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) – the other governing party beside PNL and PD – although initially expressed itself against postponing the European elections, finally agreed to support the Prime Minister decision.

The parliamentary opposition – the Social Democratic Party (PSD), the Conservative Party (PC) and the Great Romania Party (PRM) strongly support the decision taken by the PM Tariceanu and requested more directly or indirectly a restructuring of the government constitution.

- *Consequence of PM decision to defer the European elections*

- The European elections will give the start for 2 years of five electoral competitions (European elections – autumn 2007, local elections summer 2008, legislative elections autumn 2008, European elections May 2009 and presidential elections autumn 2009) and therefore they are an important test for the actual potential of the Romanian political parties. Almost all the political parties considered necessary to be well consolidated for the elections that will lead to the reconfiguration of the political scene, in the sense that they will set the bases for the future political alliances and coalitions. And that is the real reason for postponing the European elections.
- According to the positioning of the political parties regarding the PM decision to postpone the European elections, it is most likely that a new parliamentary majority is going to be established, formed out of PNL, PSD, PC, PRM and probably UDMR, different from the one settled after the legislative elections from 2004: PNL, PD, PC and UDMR.

- Based on this new possible parliamentary majority, it is possible for PNL to form by itself the government or together with UDMR as in the plenum of the Parliament it may count on 228 votes from PSD, PC and PRM, beside the 73 votes of the PNL MPs. Regarding the actual capacity of the possible PNL or PNL – UDMR government to pass its political projects through the Parliament, it may count on 207 votes out of 332 in the Chamber of Deputies and 94 votes out of 137 in the Senate.
- PD is isolated on the political scene and its potential of negotiating new formulas, new coalitions for playing the political game is severely limited.
- There is a chance for the PD members of the cabinet that refused to sign the ordinance - Vasile Blaga – the Minister of Internal Affairs and Monica Macovei – the Minister of Justice – to be revoked from the government.
- The conflict raised by postponing the European elections is the decisive prove that the governing D.A. Alliance – PD / PNL – is the facto dysfunctional and that only the electorate pressure impedes the politicians from proclaiming its official dissolution.
- As President Traian Basescu offered to temporarily suspend his intention to organize a referendum on the “uninomial vote” in favor of organizing the European elections as scheduled, after the PM decision, it is possible that the issue of organizing this referendum will gain importance again and will be brought back on the political agenda.
- Once the European elections have been postponed, it is possible that the opposition focuses again on the already started procedure of impeachment of president Traian Basescu, accused of unconstitutional political behavior.