

REGIONALIZATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM OF ROMANIA – CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

OPENING REMARKS, BUCHAREST, JULY 16, 2013

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to today's conference on the topic of regionalization and administrative reform of Romania on behalf of the Rule of Law Program of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Like other NGOs we would like to support the revision of the Romanian Constitution by organizing conferences which provide the opportunity to discuss proposals and various options of institutional construction in detail. We believe that civil society should also play an important role in this process of revising the constitution for the country and for the people.

The parliamentary commission for the revision of the constitution has submitted extensive proposals, the Legislative Council has already given an opinion, and the Venice Commission has also addressed certain aspects of the proposed changes. These will also be scrutinized by the Constitutional Court.

One of the most important subjects that are currently under debate is the proposal to regionalize Romania. This cannot surprise anybody, in fact many countries in Europe have recently undergone a process of regionalization, including in other states formerly having belonged to the Communist bloc, such as Poland or the Czech Republic.

One of the objectives of regionalization in Romania is to improve the quality of the administration and to provide citizens with better services. The other one is that the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund target regions, and if Romania intends to absorb money from these funds, entities that meet the criteria of these funds must be established.

We are not talking about a federalization, especially since Romania does not have such a tradition. We did therefore not invite an expert on German federalism or from any other country that has a federal structure.

I am, however, very happy that we could identify an outstanding expert on economics and public policies, who is also a specialist in the field of regionalization and it is my great pleasure to welcome Prof. Eftimie Spănuș. I am very grateful that you accepted our invitation.

Professor Spănuș has held important office in his country, from 1998 until 2001 he was Head of the Department of Economic Affairs of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Italy, from 2001 until 2006 he was Director of Economics and Law of Public Administration of the Institute of Economic Studies and Analyses in Rome, and from 2006 until 2008 Head of the Department for the Governmental Programme of the Presidency of

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the Council of Ministers of Italy. Since 2008 he has been professor of economics and the analysis of the impact of regulatory policies at the Higher School for Public Administration of the Council of Ministers in Rome.

Professor Espa is an expert on regionalization and he comes from a country that has strengthened its regional system in the past years.

When you have invited an expert the least thing you should do is talk about the subject that is covered by him extensively yourself.

I will therefore confine myself to expressing the hope that Professor Espa's presentation will ignite a lively debate which can or maybe even should be controversial but hopefully also leads to consensus building. I say this because it is my conviction that a constitution should be supported by a broad majority in parliament.

I thank each of you for joining us today, your participation in this event is highly appreciated. And before giving the floor to Mr. Espa, I would like to also thank Ms. Laura Stefan from our partner organization Expert Forum for joining us today and to ask her to say a few words.