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**INTERIM REPORT FROM THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL
On Progress in Romania under the Co-operation and Verification Mechanism**

2. JUDICIAL REFORM AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION: SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENTS

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Following recommendations by the Commission, Romania adopted an improved law to secure the functioning of the National Integrity Agency (ANI). However, during the same period, while the authorities continued to improve the legal framework and the operation of the justice system, Parliament decided on significant budget cuts regarding ANI in the context of general budgetary constraints. The Parliament also prevented investigations into allegations of corruption by a former minister. The elections to the Superior Council of the Magistracy were overshadowed by legal challenges and led the Constitutional Court to annul the election of four members of the SCM.

4. UPDATE ON THE STATE OF PLAY

Fight against Corruption

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Romania responded swiftly to the Commission's recommendation by adopting a revised law on the National Integrity Agency (ANI) ⁷. The new law was adopted at a special session of the Romanian Parliament convened at the request of the President. The new law addresses the key points of concern of the Commission notably by reestablishing the possibility to confiscate unjustified assets. The revised law also introduces some new provisions aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the legal framework⁸. The efficiency of the new legal framework will need to be demonstrated through a new track record.

In December, in the context of the general budgetary constraints, Parliament significantly reduced the budget of ANI for 2011. This budgetary reduction may impede the publication of declarations of assets and interests. This would constitute a setback for the transparency of assets and the effectiveness of ANI's checks which rely in part on public signals.

⁷The new law, adopted by the Parliament on 24 August and promulgated by the President on 31 August, came into force on 6 September.

⁸ One example is the introduction of a requirement upon holders of public office to declare contracts funded from state, local and external funds that they benefit from directly or indirectly. ANI believes this will assist in bringing to light conflicts of interests.