CCEEs applicant for membership : assistance in the framework of the pre-accession strategy

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In its resolution of 4th December 1997 Parliament gave the go-ahead for the EU's enlargement process. With a view to the official opening of this process at the European Conference in London on 12th March 1998, the Commission put forward a proposal for assistance to the applicant countries in central and eastern Europe as part of the pre-accession strategy. The Committee, adopted a report by Arie OOSTLANDER (EPP, NL) making a number of amendments to the Commission proposal. The committee argued that continued progress on the political criteria of the system of accession partnerships was essential for the continuation of the accession process. In addition, obligations with regard to adoption of the acquis communautaire and in particular social and environmental issues should be part of the system. In line with Parliament's resolution of 4th December, the committee called for the EP to be consulted before the Council decides on the principles, priorities and general conditions for each accession partnership. The report also emphasised that the Commission should keep Parliament regularly informed of the progress made in implementing each accession partnership. In Mr Oostlander's view, EU aid should be subject to the condition that applicant countries comply with their obligations under the Europe Agreements. Lastly, should the principles of democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights or the protection of minorities be violated, the committee called for Parliament to be consulted before the Council takes the appropriate steps. Such steps could, according to the report, involve financial, economic or budgetary control measures.