

Agenda 2000: pre-accession, coordinating aid to the applicant countries

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The committee adopted the report by Enrique BARÓN CRESPO (PES, E), with an eye to the Vienna European Council in December 1998. Mr Barón Crespo stressed - just as he did when Parliament adopted his resolution on enlargement (on 4.12.97) - that the pre-accession process must take full account of the Copenhagen criteria: establishment of the rule of law and democracy, existence of a market economy and acceptance of the *acquis communautaire*. The Luxembourg European Council (12th-13th December 1997) created two new instruments to provide pre-accession aid alongside the Phare programme: ISPA (structural aid) and an agricultural aid instrument. This meant that legislation was needed to ensure sound management of the funds allocated to these programmes (ECU 520 million for agriculture, ECU 1040 for ISPA and ECU 1560 for Phare). Hence this report on the proposed coordinating regulation, which is due to enter into force on January 1st 2000. The report calls for genuine coordination of the above instruments and for coherence between their operations and those carried out under other financial instruments of the EU and the international financial institutions. The committee says that the aid provided must be used efficiently and that there must be proper monitoring of how it is used. Efficiency will be best served if the recipient states have to share in the funding of any investment projects, as this should ensure that EU funds have a greater economic impact. With regard to monitoring, as the rapporteur said, "It would be wrong to give the Commission *carte blanche*". The committee therefore calls for the Commission to submit an annual, rather than a biennial, report. On the subject of Parliament's role, the committee reminds the Council that on 11th March 1998, during the plenary debate on the accession partnership, it undertook to consult Parliament before any changes were made to the pre-accession partnerships. The committee therefore warns the Council that the conciliation procedure will have to be opened if the Council departs from Parliament's stated positions. In addition, MEPs want to take part, if only on a consultative basis, in the proceedings of the Coordination Committee (made up of representatives of the Member States and chaired by a Commission representative, with the participation of a non-voting EIB representative) and to receive all the necessary information relating to the monitoring of expenditure.