Bulgaria: membership application and partnership, 14 December 1995

1997/2179(COS) - 09/07/2001

The committee adopted the report by Geoffrey VAN ORDEN (EPP-ED, UK) which, echoing the views of Commissioner Verheugen, said that the target date of 2004 set by the Bulgarians for completing negotiations to join the EU was "ambitious but not unrealistic". The committee noted that Bulgaria was moving in the right direction in its preparation for accession. It stressed the strategic importance of Sofia in the region and applauded its active participation in the Stability Pact. The Bulgarian political system had shown itself to be remarkably stable in recent years, and the committee expressed the hope that the new government would continue along this path. However Bulgaria must maintain efforts to tackle corruption and strengthen the legislative framework. The Roma and the Turkish minority should also be fully integrated into society, and there should be no discrimination against homosexuals. The report also welcomed Bulgaria's good macro-economic performance, while recognising that there was still some way to go in improving standards of living and reducing the unemployment which had led to widespread discontent. The government was therefore urged to step up measures to tackle the problems of poverty and social marginalisation, as well as developing a competitive market economy. The committee also stressed the importance of enabling legislation to implement the reforms needed to conform with EU legislation. Environmental concerns were also raised, including the importance of closing the Kozloduy nuclear plant. Finally, the Bulgarian authorities were urged to provide further information relating to the murder of Georgi Markov in London in 1978.