Slovenia: membership application and partnership, 10 June 1996

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This Regular Report for 2000 on Slovenia is largely similar to that of the Commission's 1997 Opinion and of the subsequent reports; however, it differs from that used in previous years on three minor points. Firstly, the part of the present report assessing Slovenia's ability to assume the obligations of membership has been structured to follow the list of 29 negotiating chapters covering the acquis; Secondly, this part has been broadened to cover also Slovenia's administrative capacity to apply the acquis under each of the negotiating chapters (previously discussed in a separate section of the report). Thirdly, the report includes, for the first time, a section assessing the progress made by Slovenia in translating the acquis into its official language. With regard to the relations between the EU and Slovenia, Slovenia has continued to implement the Europe Agreement correctly and contributed to a smooth functioning of the various joint institutions. In March 1999 the Council mandated the Commission to open negotiations with the associated countries with a view to new reciprocal concessions for agricultural products. The negotiations with Slovenia were in fact concluded between negotiators in May 2000. As a consequence, approximately 73% of EC imports and 17% of EC exports of agricultural products will be liberalised. Moreover, the negotiations on an agreement on wine and spirits were concluded in September 2000. As regards Community aid, in the years 2000-2002 the basic total financial assistance to Slovenia will amount annually to: EUR 25 million from Phare, EUR 10.8-21.7 million from ISPA and EUR 6.4 million from SAPARD. In addition, the programming exercise for Phare 2000 includes a further 129 twinning projects compared with 107 in 1999. Statistics show that a considerable range of Member States are involved. The Member States' involved in twinning allows Slovenia to benefit from the variety of administrative models and cultures in the European Union. It should be noted that Slovenia continues to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria. Progress has been made in judicial reform, which is medium term priority in the Accession Partnership. However, it is still too early to assess the effectiveness of the new measures aimed at reducing the backlog of pending court cases. Public administration is another area requiring attention. Little progress has been achieved in this respect since the last Regular Report as important pieces of legislation which are to provide the basis for reform have not yet been adopted. The denationalisation process remains slow and further efforts are needed to speed it up. On the other hand, the country can be seen as a functioning market economy and should be able to cope with competitive market pressures and forces. The legal and institutional framework for a market economy is largely in place. However, the state still has considerable influence in certain areas of the economy, for instance state-owned banks which holds back development and competition and also the slow progress of privatisation and rigid business conditions are keeping foreign direct investment inflows at a low level. Other areas in which progress has been made include: transport;environment; agriculture; free movement of goods; freedom to provide services; justice and home affairs and energy. Whereas, in the area such as telecommunications and the audio-visual sector only limited progress has been made so far. In general, Slovenia's administrative capacity for implementation of the acquis has been enhanced. Since the last Regular Report, significant progress has been made with the establishment of the supervisory and implementing institutions in the area of state aids, energy and agriculture, and separation of the institutions for standardisation, accreditation and certification.