Latvia: membership application and partnership, 13 October 1995

1997/2176(COS) - 15/07/1997 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: AGENDA 2000: presentation of the Commission's opinion on Latvia's request for membership (27 October 1995). CONTENT: all the requests for membership were assessed by the European Commission using a single method based on the criteria established at the Copenhagen European Council (June 1993). These criteria are as follows: - political criteria: the candidate countries must have stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, human rights and respect for minorities, - economic criteria: these countries must have a functioning market economy, as well as the ability to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union, - criteria relating to the ability of the countries to take on the obligations of membership (in particular integration of the acquis, to a greater or lesser extent, and respect for the criteria concerning economic and monetary union). With regard to all these criteria it emerges that: 1) in political terms, Latvia presents the characteristics of a democracy, with stable institutions guaranteeing the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. However, measures need to be taken to accelerate the rate of naturalization of Russian-speaking non-citizens to enable them to become better integrated into Latvian society; 2) in economic terms, Latvia has made considerable progress in the creation of a market economy, but would face serious difficulties in coping with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union; 3) with regard to the capacity to take on the obligations of membership, Latvia has made some progress in transposing and implementing the acquis, particularly on the single market. If it continues its efforts, it should become able to participate fully in the single market in the medium term. Particular efforts are still needed with regard to investment and in the environmental and agricultural sectors. Lastly, strengthening of the administrative structure is vital if Latvia is to have the structures to apply and enforce the acquis effectively. In conclusion, the Commission considers that negotiations for accession can be opened with Latvia only when this country has made sufficient progress in satisfying fully the conditions of membership (mainly economic criteria). The pre-accession strategy should be reinforced in order to help this country to prepare itself rapidly for the obligations of membership.