Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 15/07/1997 - Supplementary non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: AGENDA 2000: presentation of the Commission's opinion on the Czech Republic's request for membership (17 January 1996). CONTENT: All the requests for membership were assessed 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 stability of 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 these criteria, it is emerges that: 1) in political terms, the Czech Republic presents the characteristics of a democracy, with stable institutions guaranteeing the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; 2) in economic terms, the Czech Republic can be regarded as a functioning market economy, and it should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the medium term; 3) with regard to its capacity to take on the obligations of membership, this country should continue to transpose and implement the acquis. The Commission considers that the Czech Republic should be capable, in particular with regard to the single market, of applying the acquis fully in the medium term. However, certain questions will have to be resolved, such as the import deposit scheme established by this country which is contrary to the provisions of the agreement between the European Union and the Czech Republic. Particular efforts including investment are needed in sectors such as environment, agriculture and energy. Strengthening of structures is needed in company management, the financial system and the tax system. The banking sector is dominated by a few, partly state-owned, banks and its competitive position is not strong. Further work is needed on audiovisual regulations and customs. In general, further administrative reform will be indispensable if the country is to have the necessary structures to apply and enforce the acquis fully. In conclusion, the Commission considers that negotiations for accession can be opened with the Czech Republic. The pre-accession strategy will help this country to prepare itself rapidly for the obligations of membership.