Slovenia: membership application and partnership, 10 June 1996

1997/2181(COS) - 15/07/1997 - Supplementary non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: AGENDA 2000: presentation of the Commission's opinion on Slovenia's request for membership (10 June 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, Slovenia 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, Slovenia can be regarded as a functioning market economy and it should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Slovenia has advanced considerably in liberalisation and privatisation and achieved a successful stabilisation of the economy after having falling GDP between 1993 and 1996. However, there is a lack of competition in some sectors, in particular the financial sector; 3) with regard to its capacity to take on the obligations of membership, Slovenia must continue its efforts concerning the transposition and practical implementation of the acquis, in particular on the single market. Substantial work is still needed in the fields of public procurement, competition, insurance, freedom of capital movements, product conformity and standardisation. Introduction of VAT is a top priority. Very important efforts will be required for the environment (investment -administration) and, in the case of energy, efforts are still needed on monopoly operations, price fixing, access to networks and state intervention in the solid fuel sector. In general further administrative reform will be indispensable if the country is to have the structures to apply and enforce the acquis effectively. In conclusion, the Commission considers that negotiations for membership could be opened with Slovenia as soon as this country has ratified the European Union-Slovenia Europe Agreement (a precondition for any accession negotiations).