Agenda 2000, Accession partnerships: principles, priorities, intermediate objectives and conditions

1998/2031(COS) - 04/02/1998 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: defining for each of the applicants for accession in Central and Eastern Europe a programme of work setting out the priorities and short and medium term objectives regarding accession to the Union ('accession partnerships'). SUBJECT: The proposal for a regulation on assistance to the applicant countries in Central and Eastern Europe in the framework of the pre-accession strategy (CNS /1997/0351) states that the principles, priorities and intermediate objectives of accession shall be contained in the individual 'accession partnerships' to be adopted by the Council on a proposal from the Commission. This proposal accordingly sets out the short and medium term objectives and priorities for each of the countries concerned. Concerning the substance of these partnership agreements, which provide a standard framework setting out all pre-accession assistance (Phare, European agreements, etc.), the Commission has consulted the countries concerned in drawing up an outline of measures to be taken sector by sector, the applicant countries being required to establish a number of priorities and a timetable for their realization. For each of the countries concerned, the priorities combine national objectives with the implementation of the Community acquis. They are divided into two groups: 1) Priority questions to be settled in 1998 which will be given particular attention in the Commission report at the end of 1998 on each of the applicant countries. 2) Medium-term objectives to be reached after a few years. The short-term objectives concern economic reform, reinforcement of institutional administrative capacity, measures to speed up the implementation of internal market rules, implementation of the justice and home affairs programme (in particular national programmes to combat corrupting and organized crime) and the adoption and implementation of environmental strategies and reform of the energy sector (in particular nuclear energy). Where appropriate, measures of a political nature are also envisaged (facilities for refugees, naturalization etc). In the longer term, measures to consolidate economic, political and regulatory action already commenced, together with the full restructuring of the agricultural sector to bring it into line with the common agricultural policy are envisaged. This will be accompanied by medium-term measures with regard to the Euro and the application of convergence criteria to the countries concerned (these countries are not expected to adopt the Euro immediately on accession), implementation of an economic and social cohesion policy (regional policy), and the development of appropriate strategies in the field of employment and social affairs. With regard to programming, pre-accession aid will be set for each country for the period 1998-1999 (as part of the Phare programme), together with follow-up measures. Assistance will be conditional upon full respect for the provisions of the association agreements and the accession criteria established in Copenhagen (Agenda 2000 - COS/1997/2183). The Council must decide on the partnership agreements by 15 March 1998, following adoption of the framework regulation (CNS/1997/0351).