2004 enlargement: accession strategies for environment with the candidate countries CEECs

1998/2118(COS) - 20/05/1998 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: within the framework of Agenda 2000, to propose a special strategy for the adoption and implementation of the Community's environmental acquis by the candidate countries. CONTENT: according to this Commission communication, it is becoming more and more clear that the environmental needs of the candidate countries are huge. An independent assessment requested by the Commission in this respect concluded that the total investment costs of meeting the environmental acquis are likely to be around ECU 120 billion for the ten countries in central and eastern Europe. The bulk of the investment is likely to be needed for air pollution abatement, water and waste water management and the management and disposal of urban and dangerous waste. In this context, currently available and future Community funding will be very far from sufficient to fill the gap in the level of environmental protection in the CEECs. Placing heavy emphasis on the inadequacy of available investment and the efforts which will need to be undertaken by the candidate countries in order to address the legislative, administrative and financial shortcomings in this area, the communication defines a general framework and highlights priority actions which should be implemented to make best use of the available funds. According to the document, Community aid (essentially PHARE and the future ISPA pre-accession structural aid fund) should concentrate on the following elements: - transposition of the Union's environmental acquis with a view to modernising industry and energy production and making urban environmental infrastructures and services more efficient and more profitable: this will involve amending legislation currently in force in the CEECs in areas such as water protection, air quality, waste management, nature protection, industrial pollution control, the risk of exposure to chemicals and protection against major industrial hazards; - implementation of preventive measures, through the integration of ecological and sustainable development considerations into sectoral policy (transport, energy, agriculture). This will essentially involve reviewing the basic environmental administration procedures of the countries concerned (rational assessment of the environmental impact of public and private projects, transparency and access to environmental information etc.). As regards the major political issue of nuclear safety, this represents a priority which requires more than the simple approximation of environmental legislation. Community financial assistance, although restricted, should serve as a catalyst and allow the mobilisation of other resources. Provision is notably made for coordination of Community aid with outside aid with a view to optimising its effect. Cooperation with international institutions will be strengthened (the EBRD and the World Bank). Provision is also made for the progressive integration of these countries into the EU's LIFE programme and the activities of the European Environment Agency). Finally, provision is made for scientific and technical activities (within the fifth framework programme for RDT) as well as strengthening regional cooperation as regards important ecological issues.