Bulgaria: membership application and partnership, 14 December 1995

1997/2179(COS) - 17/12/1998

PURPOSE: to present the regular report from the Commission on Bulgaria's progress towards accession. CONTENT: In line with the timetable of Agenda 2000 and the direction given by the European Council in Cardiff, the Commission presents a report in the form of an appraisal of the progress made by this country with regard to accession. The report examines: - the relations between Bulgaria and the EU, particularly in the framework of the Europe Agreement; - the situation in respect of the political conditions set by the European Council (democracy, rule of law, human rights, protection of minorities); - Bulgaria's situation and prospects in respect of the economic conditions mentioned by the European Council (functioning market economy, capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union); - the question of Bulgaria's capacity to adopt the obligations of membership, that is, the acquis of the Union as expressed in the Treaty, the secondary legislation and the policies of the Union. The Commission assesses Bulgaria's results in economic and political terms as satisfactory : Bulgaria's institutions are stable although it needs to devote continuing attention to the reform of the judiciary and to fighting corruption more effectively. However, from an economic perspective, the report observes that Bulgaria is likely to experience considerable difficulties facing up to competitive pressures and market forces within the Union in the medium term. As far as legislative alignment is concerned, the pattern of transposition, as long as it is accompanied by a strengthening of the relevant institutions, should enable Bulgaria to assume its obligations arising from membership. Nevertheless, additional efforts will be necessary in particular in the area of the single market, standards and testing, control on state aids and justiceand home affairs. There also remains the thorny question of the Kozloduy nuclear plant which the Union would like to see dismantled. The National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis is currently in the course of revision to place greater stress on the process of alignment with Community legislation. During the second half of 1999, the Commission will present to the Council its position regarding the revised version of this programme at the time of the re-examination of the Accession Partnership.