Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

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This composite paper presents an outline of the progress made towards accession by all of the candidate countries in relation to the Copenhagen criteria since the publication of the Commission's opinions in June 1997. These regular reports for each of the candidate countries concentrate on all aspects of the adoption of the Community acquis and establish a precise assessment of the capacity of each of the candidates to fulfil the political and economic criteria required for accession. In its general conclusion, the composite paper indicates that, whatever the place of the candidate countries in the accession process and in the negotiations, much remains to be done in order to fully conform to the Community acquis. In this respect, whether considering the "in" countries (those who will qualify for accession in the next wave) or the "pre-in" countries (those who have not been selected), the difference is not very important. Overall, the Commission's analysis of the progress achieved by each of the candidate countries since June 1997 has not persuaded it to amend its general assessment of the candidacies. Therefore, it does not consider it necessary, on the basis of the reports being presented, to make new recommendations "on the conduct or extension of the negotiations", as envisaged by the European Council. Nonetheless, the Commission stresses the increasing importance of revising the national programmes for the adoption of the acquis in order to further accelerate the process of alignment with European legislation and to strengthen the administrative capacity of the candidate countries, with a view to efficiently implementing all the regulations necessary for admission to the Union. The document ends by specifying that the preparatory measures undertaken must determine for now, the assistance of the Union to these countries and, subsequently, the timetable for the first accessions. For this reason, the Commission intends to submit further progress reports to the Council at the end of 1999 to allow it, if appropriate, to take decisions on the conduct or extension of the negotiations.