2004 enlargement: state of preparedness for Union membership of the 10 new countries. Comprehensive monitoring report

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MONITORING REPORT ON POLAND : Poland has maintained a stable macroeconomic situation and is experiencing a gradual recovery, mainly driven by external demand. The reform path has nearly come to a halt since last year's Report. As regards the areas, where last year's report suggested improvements, some progress has been made, but challenges remain. The Polish authorities have shown so far some reluctance to tackle the needed fiscal adjustment. A deep restructuring and reduction of public expenditure are, however, crucial in order to further improve the policy mix, reverse the rapid rise in public debt, and prepare Poland's public finances for accession. The Polish authorities should ensure that any decision on the use of the revaluation reserve does not undermine the financial independence of the central bank. Progress in restructuring heavy industries, energy distribution and agriculture has been modest since last year and considerable efforts still need to be made to advance the reform agenda in this area. The new insolvency law adopted in February upgrades the bankruptcy and liquidation framework and brings it into line with the requirements of a modern market economy. Little progress has been achieved as regards the functioning of the land registry, and the authorities need to pursue their efforts at modernising the system. As regards overall administrative and judicial capacity, sufficient conditions are in place for the implementation of the acquis by the Polish public administration and judiciary, but there is room for further improvements. In the field of public administration, the number of civil servants appointed from open competitions should increase, while coordination across the civil service should be improved and structures dealing with European integration need strengthening. Efforts are still needed to improve the efficiency and transparency of the judiciary, with particular attention to further developing and organising the system of legal aid. The fight against corruption should continue to receive high priority, in particular through strengthening co-ordination structures and administrative support to ensure an effective implementation of the anticorruption strategy. As regards the implementation of the acquis in specific policy areas, it should be noted that Poland has reached a high level of alignment with the acquis in most policy areas. The Commission's methodology consists of three categories of areas which are identified in accordance with their degree of alignment with the acquis: 1) areas that cause no or few problems; 2) areas in which Poland partially meets the commitments and requirements and needs to make enhanced efforts in order to complete its preparations for accession; 3) areas that Poland must take immediate and decisive action to address. These include nine issues of serious concern in three chapters of the acquis if it is to be ready by the date of accession. - free movement of persons, relating to Poland's preparations for mutual recognition of qualifications, in particular as regards training for certain professions in the healthcare sector; - agriculture, as regards Poland's preparations to set up its Paying Agencies, to implement the Integrated Administration andControl System and to upgrade agri-food establishments in line with public health requirements. Furthermore, it concerns, in the area of veterinary and phytosanitary control, measures relating to transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) and animal by-products, movement controls of animals, and the control of potato ring rot and wart disease; - resource management and inspection and control, and market policy in the fisheries chapter.