2004 enlargement: preparation of the CEECs for integration into the internal market. White paper

1995/2064(COS) - 17/04/1996 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Parliament adopted the report by Mr Arie OOSTLANDER (PPE, NL) on the Commission's White Paper on the preparation of the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe for integration into the internal market of the Union. - On the principle of accession: Parliament believes that enlargement presents an opportunity for the European Union to contribute to peace, security and prosperity throughout Europe. It noted that the European Council decided at its meeting of December 1995 that the negotiations with the candidate countries would only start half a year after the end of the IGC and emphasized that no decision could be taken concerning the outcome so long as the financial consequences of the accessions were not fully known. It urged the Council at the IGC to increase the transparency of decision-making and to do its utmost to ensure that the institutions functioned effectively after enlargement. Measures should be taken to ensure that the conclusion of an Association Agreement or Accession Treaty cannot be blocked by a single country and that new Member States cannot veto the accession of subsequent ones. It took the view that, upon their accession to the Union, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe should accept the 'acquis communautaire' in its entirety and cooperate in the institutional development of the Union in the direction of greater democracy and more effective decision-making procedures involving the transfer of part of national sovereignty to European level. It stressed that accession consultations should begin simultaneously so as to prevent the emergence of classes of applicant countries and urged the Commission to take account of the state of affairs in each country with regard to the rule of law, democracy and respect for the rights of minorities in the opinions it was to draw up. These documents should be submitted to it immediately after the IGC. At the same time it pointed out that, for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, membership involved not only rights but also obligations. They should persevere in the restructuring and reforms embarked upon in the transition to a social market economy. They also had to fully establish and maintain a democratic system at all levels of society. During the transitional period encouraging private investment was vital. Parliament pointed out, however, that overhasty accession by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe on purely political grounds would undermine the internal market itself and would not help the Union to function efficiently. It called for the establishment of a phased plan which took account of the social dimension with a view to the CEECs gradual integration into the internal market. It called on the Union to adopt measures to strengthen the CEECs social, administrative and organizational structure in the following areas: - development of the social dialogue; - social security schemes and health services; - employment agencies; - worker representation bodies; - introduction of vocational training schemes and programmes aimed at guaranteeing equal opportunities for men and women; - collection of accurate statistics; - labour inspection schemes and action to counter discrimination in the workplace; - action to combat poverty and social exclusion. It called on the Commission to draw up minimum criteria to be complied with in the run-up to accession and to inform it regularly of the progress made in the various areas, with an effective monitoring of the criteria drawn up. As regards the financial and socio-economic aspects of accession: Parliament called on the Commission to present it with a realistic analysis of the political and economic benefits and budgetary consequences of enlargement, as well as its impact on the CAP and the Structural Funds. Whilst acknowledging that protecting the markets of Central and Eastern European countries was permissible in order to facilitate the viable development of domestic trade, it pointed out that disguised forms of protectionism would do nothing to promote either side's confidence in the further positive development of trade relations. It noted the shortcomings in the current transit system and opposed any extension of the common transit system to the CEECs before: . the transit system currently in force in the Union has been reformed, . the resources at the disposal of the customs administrations have been redirected, . the customs administrations' legal powers have been strengthened in order to ensure genuine control. It also hoped that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe would be involved in the Union's programmes to combat fraud and stressed the important monitoring role of the Court of Auditors. It

referred to the observations made in the latter's report about the unclear organization of aid to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with a view to remedying waste and inefficiency as far as possible. With regard to the PHARE programme, it reiterated its belief in the maximum possible level of operational decentralization for the management of the programme and stressed the importance of the procurement rules applying to the PHARE programme being brought into line with the rules applying to the internal EU programmes. It called for a special commitment to tackling the position of women in the CEECs, particularly as regards equality of opportunity and, above all, prostitution. With regard to the rebuilding of civil society, it felt that the NGOs had an important role to play and called on the Commission to give active support to these organizations. Parliament noted that privatization in the fields of culture, education, social welfare and health, in line with the EU's vision of a social market economy, was more a matter for socially-oriented bodies (non-profit-making NGOs) than for the profit-oriented commercial sector. In the industrial sector, Parliament stressed the importance of industrial cooperation between the EU Member States and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, without prejudice to the social acquis and ecological guarantees. It called for the development of a code of conduct for firms based in the EU that invested in the CEECs so that the same environmental norms and laws that applied in the EU were also applied in the CEECs. It called on the Commission to make the best possible use of the results of PHARE, especially with regard to energy. It laid particular emphasis on the transfer of technology for the development and diversification of energy sources and notably nuclear safety. Aware of the serious environmental problems inherited by the CEECs, it called for financial assistance and institutional adjustments in those countries in order to draw the problem to the attention of their authorities and public opinion. As regards transport, Parliament proposed a rapid harmonization of the national legislation of the CEECs with EU transport legislation and called for investment in the trans-European networks and less damaging modes of transport (such as rail and combined transport, for example). It attached great importance to regional and international development programmes which could enable the CEECs to promote all useful forms of cooperation more effectively. With regard to agriculture, Parliament believed that the CEECs must carry out fundamental reforms. Further intensification of contacts was necessary at all levels with a view to the convergence of agricultural policies. This meant eliminating the inequality in agricultural trade between the Union and the candidates for accession. The latter were urged to intensify trade with the CIS States. Furthermore, Parliament called on the Union not to resort to export subsidies for agricultural products where the domestic production of the associated countries was under threat. As regards education, information and the media, Parliament wished priority to be assigned to training and transfers of know how to improve the quality of public administration and proposed, therefore, that the number of Jean Monnet chairs be significantly increased. It also hoped that the Commission would assist the ordinary citizen towards a better understanding of all the implications of accession through an effective communication policy. In addition to economic support, Parliament emphasized the need for education and training actions and aid to local model projects in the fields of youth, culture, education and the audio visual sector. It was important to act more quickly to open up programmes such as Socrates and Leonardo, particularly the facilities for language education, to the CEECs. Regarding the media, Parliament urged the Commission to adopt practical measures in order to eliminate material problems by providing financial and operational support to free and independent media. As regards the rule of law and internal security: Parliament stressed the decisive role of the protection of human rights and pointed out that it is important to find solutions to problems which arise in protecting the rights of minorities and combating racism, anti-semitism, xenophobia and intolerance. It believed that socially oriented bodies have a vital part to play in this context and observed that developing and maintaining the rule of law is a necessary condition for tackling cross-border crime through European cooperation in the fields of Home Affairs and Justice. It regarded a structured dialogue with the Ministers of Home Affairs and Justice as essential and called for that dialogue to be expanded by involving representatives of the candidates for accession in European cooperation arrangements such as Europol, CIREFI and the Monitoring Centre for drugs. In addition, it urged the CEECs to draw up stringent practical measures to help combat illegal immigration to the countries of the Union. Finally, it called on all the CEECs scrupulously to comply with the clauses concerning human rights and the rights of minorities and called on them to deal with any conflict that might exist through a permanent and constructive dialogue structure in the spirit of the Stability Pact. As regards international relations and

security: it noted the desire of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to opt independently for integration into the security structures of which most EU Member States were already members. Parliament would welcome the candidate country eventually being a party to future Union security legislation, which would be considered at the IGC. This would constitute a contribution to peace and security in the European Continent. The debate about the integration of the WEU and the EU should take into account the eventual accession of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Since, in addition to military aspects, security had economic, ecological and social aspects the Commission should have at its disposal the necessary instruments. Parliament expected the applicants for accession to start making a major contribution to the CFSP through structured dialogue.