2004 enlargement: state of the negotiations, progress towards accession by the candidate countries. Report

2002/2023(COS) - 13/06/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution by Elmar BROK (EPP-ED, Germany) on the state of the enlargement negotiations. (Please refer to the document dated 22/05/02.) Whilst Parliament confirmed that all negotiating countries fulfilled the political criteria, it emphasised the need to follow closely the situation of minorities, the phenomenon of racism and xenophobia and anti-Semitism, and other forms of discrimination. All candidate countries concerned should undertake more decisive action to overcome the problem of the Roma minorities, particularly with regard to the elimination of discriminatory practices of State institutions and public authorities. Each country is asked to submit a report to the European institutions before the end of the accession negotiations on how they plan to resolve the problems of the Roma before the end of the decade. The EU should support the planned measures. The European Parliament went on to emphasise the importance of a high level of nuclear safety in the candidate countries. The closure of reactors considered non-upgradeable at reasonable cost operating in Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovakia must be in line with the Accession Partnership Agreements and the related Memoranda of Understanding. The importance of food safety for European consumers was also emphasised. On the chapter on agriculture, Parliament insisted not only on the transposition of the acquis but also on the fulfilment of measures relating to external border controls, protection rules regarding BSE, standards of food-processing establishments and animal welfare rules. It was noted with concern that pre-accession funds and loans may be used for projects in the candidate countries that have the potential to destroy sites which would be granted protection under Community nature conservation legislation. Accordingly, Parliament wanted to ensure that all infrastructure development projects financed by pre-accession funds are consistent with Community environmental legislation. Parliament supported the Commission's strategy on increasing citizen's awareness of enlargement in both the Member States and the candidate countries, especially with regard to transparency and public access to documents. Parliament will open the first EP information offices in four candidate countries later this year and supported the efforts to decentralise the implementation of the communication strategy for each country. These information offices should primarily have the task of facilitating developments, which needs to be exercised with care. There are significant changes in public opinion in the candidate countries towards EU membership. Public approval of EU membership must not be taken for granted. The resolution contains specific paragraphs on all official candidate countries. With regard to Turkey, Parliament stated that the latter must proceed with the constitutional reforms which are fundamental to the process of democratisation and which have brought positive results since their launch. These and other reforms must achieve real progress in the area of human rights and freedoms so that the persistent gap between Turkey's commitment to fulfil the political Copenhagen criteria and their implementation may be eliminated. The pre-accession strategy for Turkey should be fully implemented and the EU must assist the acceleration of the preparations for Turkey's accession. Parliament encouraged Turkey to support the ongoing talks on the Cyprus problem.