Environmental aspects of the enlargement negotiations

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The European Parliament, having regard to the contributions of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy, have called on the candidate countries to give the highest priority to the transposition of the environment acquis into their national legislation with accomplishment at the latest by the day of accession. The Parliament insists that, in the likely event that the transition periods are granted to the new Member States in the field of environment, realistic interim targets should be stipulated in the accession treaties, and that not meeting these targets should be treated as regular infringment of Community law. Furthermore, the candidate countries are called upon to forward, annually to the European Parliament, their National Programmes for the Adoption of the acquis, including precise timetables and detailing progress made with legislative processes. As far as financing is concerned, the Parliament asks that EU pre-accession aid for environmental purposes to the candidate countries be doubled by 2006. EU financial instruments such as PHARE and SAPARD should be interlinked and should offer stronger support for sustainable development. It also insists that the EUR 5 million limit for ISPA funding be removed in order to give small, innovative projects and chance. The Commission is equally called upon to make and publish environmental impact assessments of all EU-financed pre-accession projects and plans, including loans from the EIB, prior to putting these funds into operation. The need for a strong commitment on the part both of the candidate countries and of the EU in the field of environment and nuclear safety is stressed by the Parliament. In addition, the Commission, the Council and the governments of the existing Member States and the candidate countries are called upon to work to increase awareness and understanding in the candidate countries of the importance of environmental protection and nature conservation in general and Natura 2000.