2004 enlargement of the European Union: progress towards accession by the candidate countries in 1999

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In adopting the report drafted by Mr Elmar BROK (EPP/ED, D) on enlargement of the EU, the European Parliament welcomes the progress made in the accession negotiations with all the candidate countries and calls on the Commission and the Council to ensure that the principle of differentiation is fully implemented so that each country is judged on its own merits in its application for membership. The candidate countries in their turn are urged to make further efforts to strengthen their administrative capacities for the implementation of the "acquis communautaire" and also continue building up their financial control and audit procedures to ensure that pre-accession aid is properly controlled. They should also maintain the fight against corruption. In addition, the resolution calls on the Commission to make sufficient PHARE funds available to help the candidate countries to tackle Roma-related and child protection problems by enhancing national PHARE-funded programmes with a multi-country programme which should be administered in close association with the Roma communities and local authorities. Moreover, candidate countries are called upon to afford full rights to minorities. The European Parliament insists that after the conclusion of the Intergovernmental Conference, a clear accession scenario should be established. Candidate countries are urged to seek more actively to cooperate among themselves and set up regional cooperation machinery. The Commission should provide resources and fund it. It should be pointed out that the adoption of the EC acquis in the area of equality is a sine qua non for accession since it is a question essentially of human rights and that the necessary institutional building in this area is a vital pre-requisite to full implementation of the acquis. Moreover, the Dublin Convention should be reformed as it is an important element of the EU's internal preparations for enlargement because it is needed in order to prevent a disproportionately high number of applications for asylum being made in the future Member States on account of their geographical location. The European Parliament considers that the independence of the Court of Auditors or its equivalent in each candidate country must be safeguarded and that applicant countries should become fully involved in combating fraud and corruption affecting the financial interests of the EU. With regard to the budget commitments, the Parliament considers that the existing budget commitments will prove insufficient to ensure success in the long term of this historical enlargement unless there is a radical reform of the existing expenditure policies. The Commission is urged to examine the economic and budgetary implications beyond the period of the financial framework in 2006 - which was based on the assumption of only six joining. Finally, the Parliament insists that the EU institutions, the Member States and the candidate countries do everything in their power to ensure that the European Parliament can give its assent to the first accession treaties before the European Parliament elections in 2004 in order that these countries might have the prospect of participating in those elections.