Republic of Bulgaria: application for accession to the European Union

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Geoffrey VAN ORDEN (EPP-ED , UK) on Bulgaria 's application to become a member of the EU. MEPs said that the country had made "excellent progress" so far, but that there were still a number of steps its government needed to take. For example, they regretted the Bulgarian parliament's failure to adopt new penal codes for fighting corruption more effectively and also called for greater efforts to combat organised crime. The committee warmly welcomed the recent launch of the 'Decade of Roma Inclusion', and measures to improve housing in city areas mainly populated by Roma, but it pointed out that more needed to be done to end segregation of Roma children in schools, reduce high unemployment rates and provide better health care.

MEPs commended Bulgaria 's economic performance, the enlargement of the private sector and the progress made in liberalising key industries. They also welcomed the government's plan to re-run the auction for Bulgartabac subsidiaries. The report expressed concern, however, that due to the agreement on the closure of the Kozloduy nuclear plant, there was a risk of energy blackouts in the entire region. It therefore urged the EU Council of Ministers to be more flexible with regard to the closure dates.

Lastly, MEPs called on the Commission to set aside appropriate funding for information campaigns in order to improve public understanding of the implications of Bulgaria 's accession.