Report on the strategy paper on progress in the enlargement process

2005/2206(INI) - 12/12/2005

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

Acceding countries: the Council welcomed the findings and recommendations presented by the Commission on 25 October 2005 to the Council and the European Parliament in its Comprehensive Monitoring Reports on Bulgaria and Romania. It noted with satisfaction the good progress highlighted in these reports. At the same time, it urged Bulgaria and Romania to address decisively and without delay the concerns highlighted in these reports, and to fulfil all commitments made in the Accession Treaty, in order to enable accession on 1 January 2007 as planned and, thus, the successful completion of the fifth enlargement. It welcomed the intention of the Commission to submit a monitoring report to the Council and Parliament in April/May 2006 in order to review the situation in line with the provisions of the Accession Treaty.

Enlargement Strategy: the Council welcomed and held a preliminary exchange of views on the Commission's Communication on Enlargement presented on 9 November 2005. The Council concluded that the Enlargement Strategy Paper 2005 is a good basis for a necessary, further discussion on enlargement in 2006 and that, meanwhile, it should pay careful attention to the need to:

· anchor and develop support for the enlargement process across the EU. Particular account should be taken of the importance of communication and the views of EU citizens, while paying attention to the important issue of the absorption capacity of the Union;

· apply effective conditionality, at all stages of the process, in a fair and rigorous way;

· reiterate strong encouragement to candidate countries, and other countries in the Western Balkans, along the road to reform and stability by reconfirming their European perspective.

Croatia: the Council recalled its decision to open accession negotiations with Croatia as well as the specific modalities of this process as set out in the Negotiating Framework. The Council welcomed political agreement on the Accession Partnership with Croatia, with the objective of providing support for overcoming particular problems with a view to accession. It underlined its commitment to this process while stressing the importance of Croatia making progress in relation to the priorities identified by the EU in the Accession Partnership, in particular by fulfilling its obligations in respect of the EU and its Member States. It encouraged Croatia to respond to its Accession Partnership by updating its national plan for implementing the identified priorities and recalled that the advancement of negotiations would be guided inter alia by progress in implementing the Accession Partnership.

Turkey: the Council recalled its decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey as well as the specific modalities of this process as set out in the Negotiating Framework.

The Council welcomed political agreement on the Accession Partnership with Turkey, with the objective of providing support for overcoming particular problems with a view to accession. It encouraged Turkey to respond to its Accession Partnership by updating its national plan for implementing the identified priorities and recalled that the advancement of negotiations would be guided inter alia by progress in implementing the Accession Partnership.

Lastly, the Council recalled that it would ensure a follow-up in 2006 on the progress made on relevant issues set out in the Declaration of the EC and its Member States of 21 September 2005.