Basic information

1997/2180(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	Procedure completed
Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996 **Subject** 8.20.02 Enlargement 2004: new Member States **Geographical area** Czechia	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security, Defense	SCHRÖDER Jürgen (PPE-DE)	07/11/2000

Former committee responsible	Former rapporteur	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs, Security and Defense Policy	CARNERO GONZÁLEZ Carlos (GUE/NGL)	23/06/1997
AFET Foreign Affairs, Security and Defense Policy	SCHRÖDER Jürgen (PPE-DE)	23/09/1999

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
BUDG Budgets	BÖGE Reimer (PPE-DE)	24/04/2001
CONT Budgetary Control	BÖSCH Herbert (PSE)	29/05/2001
LIBE Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs	OOSTLANDER Arie M. (PPE-DE) BERGER Maria (PSE)	29/05/2001 29/05/2001
ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs	JONCKHEER Pierre (V/ALE)	21/03/2001
JURI Legal Affairs and Internal Market	BERGER Maria (PSE)	11/04/2001

ITRE	Industry, External Trade, Research, Energy	GLANTE Norbert (PSE)	21/03/2001
EMPL	Employment and Social Affairs	ETTL Harald (PSE)	12/04/2000
AGRI	Agriculture and Rural Development	GÖRLACH Willi (PSE)	27/03/2001
RETT	Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism	POLI BORTONE Adriana (UEN)	06/02/2001
CULT	Culture, Youth, Education, Media and Sport	ANDREASEN Ole (ELDR)	11/04/2001
AFCO	Constitutional Affairs	RACK Reinhard (PPE-DE)	24/01/2001
FEMM	Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities	MARTENS Maria (PPE-DE)	20/03/2001

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
General Affairs	2078	1998-03-30
General Affairs	1902	1996-01-29
Culture	2427	2002-05-23

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
29/01/1996	Debate in Council		Summary
17/12/1998	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1998)0708	Summary
08/03/1999	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
24/03/1999	Vote in committee		Summary
24/03/1999	Committee interim report tabled for plenary	A4-0157/1999	
14/04/1999	Debate in Parliament		
23/05/2000	Additional information		Summary
14/09/2000	Vote in committee		Summary
14/09/2000	Committee interim report tabled for plenary	A5-0245/2000	

03/10/2000	Debate in Parliament		
04/10/2000	Decision by Parliament	T5-0422/2000	Summary
09/07/2001	Vote in committee		Summary
09/07/2001	Committee interim report tabled for plenary	A5-0255/2001	
04/09/2001	Debate in Parliament		
05/09/2001	Decision by Parliament	T5-0431/2001	Summary
05/09/2001	End of procedure in Parliament		
21/03/2002	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	1997/2180(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/5/13763 AFET/4/10902 AFET/4/09131

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee interim report tabled for plenary		A4-0157/1999 OJ C 219 30.07.1999, p. 0007	24/03/1999	
Interim resolution adopted by Parliament		T4-0333/1999 OJ C 219 30.07.1999, p. 0370-0443	15/04/1999	Summary
Committee interim report tabled for plenary		A5-0245/2000 OJ C 178 22.06.2001, p. 0007	14/09/2000	
Interim resolution adopted by Parliament		T5-0422/2000 OJ C 178 22.06.2001, p. 0071-0140	04/10/2000	Summary
Committee interim report tabled for plenary		A5-0255/2001	09/07/2001	
Interim resolution adopted by Parliament		T5-0431/2001 OJ C 072 21.03.2002, p. 0082-0181 E	05/09/2001	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
	COM(1997)2009		

Supplementary non-legislative basic document		15/07/1997	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(1998)0708	17/12/1998	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	COM(1998)0712	17/12/1998	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(1999)0500	13/10/1999	Summary
Supplementary non-legislative basic document	COM(1999)0503	13/10/1999	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	COM(2000)0700	08/11/2000	Summary
Supplementary non-legislative basic document	COM(2000)0703	08/11/2000	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	COM(2001)0653	13/11/2001	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2001)0700	13/11/2001	
Supplementary non-legislative basic document	SEC(2001)1746	13/11/2001	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2002)0700	09/10/2002	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2002)1402	09/10/2002	

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
EU	Document attached to the procedure	31999D0858 OJ L 335 28.12.1999, p. 0055	06/12/1999	Summary
EU	Document attached to the procedure	32002D0085 OJ L 044 14.02.2002, p. 0020-0028	28/01/2002	

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 13/11/2001 - Document attached to the procedure

In line with the previous strategy papers from the Commission which aim to set out the steps to be followed for the next enlargement, the Commission has puslished a new general document which sets out the progress made by all of the candidate countries with regard to accession to the European Union. If, on the one hand, certain countries have made substantial progress, considerable efforts still have to be made in order to ensure the effective application of EU legislation and standards ("acquis communautaire") before their accession. This is why the Commission announces that it shall present an important action plan in order to help the candidate countries strengthen their institution building capacities. The negotiations are conducted on the basis of the existing acquis, applying the principles of own merits and catching-up. It shall continue to follow the road map (please refer to the previous Commission working document for the year 2000) and the calendar approved by the European Council, which foresees the conclusion of the negotiations with the better prepared candidate countries before the end of 2002. In this context, the Union does not create new conditions for accession, which signifies that for all the subjects to come (in particular those which bare important financial implications such as agriculture, regional policy and the budget, shall be dealt with throughout the first semester of 2002), the Commission shall present negotiation proposals based on the acquis and the existing budgetary framework. The Commission considers that this framework provides a sufficient basis for the accession of up to 10 new Member States in 2004. The accession negotiations can be concluded independently of decisions for financing the EU after 2006. Given the

present pace of negotiations and the progress made so far, the Commission should be able to make recommendations on those candidate countries ready for accession on the basis of its 2002 Regular Reports. It should also be noted that the countries which should be ready for accession on this date may be able to participate as Members of the Union in the 2004 European Parliament elections. In addition, it should be noted that the Commission's important action plan aiming to reinforce institution building should mobilise EUR 1 billion for the year 2002 alone (drawn mostly from the PHARE programme). In conclusion, the Commission announced that from November 2002, the Regular Reports that it presents shall identify which candidate countries are ready to become full Members of the European Union. The countries which do not conclude the negotiations in 2002 shall become subject to a new updated road map and eventually, a revised pre-accession strategy.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 05/09/2001 - Interim resolution adopted by Parliament

The European Parliament adopted the report by Mr Jürgen SCHRÖDER (EPP-ED, D) on the Czech Republic's application for membership of the European Union. (Please refer to the previous text). Moreover, it should be noted that an amendment was adopted which stresses the need for transparent controls of the use of state aids.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 13/10/1999 - Supplementary non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : To present the 1999 Regular Report on the Czech Republic's progress towards accession. CONTENT : The report follows essentially the same structure as previous regular reports. It looks at relations with the European Union and analyses the situation in respect of the Copenhagen criteria. It addresses the question of the Czech Republic's capacity to take on the acquis and also covers judicial and administrative capacity as requested by the Madrid Council. Relations with the Union: the implementation of the Europe Agreement by the Czech Republic has been uneven, although difficulties have been resolved through the functioning of the joint institutions. Decisions were taken that were not in conformity with the Europe Agreement, including the preliminary safeguard measures for sugar imports. Most of the financial assistance has been given under the Phare programme (EUR 21 million in 1999 plus EUR 45 million for cross-border cooperation). In the years 2000-2002, total financial assistance will amount to 79M EUR for Phare, 22.1M EUR for SAPARD and between 55 and 80M EUR for ISPA, per year. Copenhagen political criteria: the Czech Republic fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria. Further efforts should, however,be made to reform the judiciary, since the situation described in last year's report remains basically unchanged. Judges are not sufficiently specialised, and training in international or Community law is not provided by the Further Training of Judges Institute. Judges also have to perform time-consuming administrative tasks. Corruption is a serious problem, and an effective policy on economic crime has not been developed. The situation of the Roma has not evolved markedly over the past year. It remains characterised by widespread discrimination, as anti-Roma prejudice remains high and protection from the police and the courts is often inadequate. Policies to counter these issues must be adequately funded. Copenhagen economic criteria: The Czech Republic can be regarded as a functioning market economy. It should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the medium term, but implementation of legal and structural reforms must be accelerated. The recent recession shows that reforms have not been sufficient. Positive macroeconomic developments have been recorded, including the narrowing of external imbalance. Special attention must be given to law enforcement and improving corporate governance. Public finances should be made more transparent. Ability to assume the obligations of membership: the pace of alignment has not picked up significantly and progress is uneven across sectors. The areas of satisfactory progress include the standards and certification, liberalisation of capital markets and the customs sector. Less satisfactory are intellectual property, public procurement and data protection, amongst others, where there has been little movement towards completing alignment. The record in meeting the short term Accession Partnership priorities is not satisfactory. Areas of concern include the internal market, justice and home affairs and the environment. Administrative capacity to apply the acquis: Limited steps have been taken towards general public administration reform. Many areas need continuing work. Structures must be set up for Common Agricultural Policy implementation. Continued attention needs to be paid to state aid monitoring capacities, enforcement of environment legislation and internal control capabilities.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 09/10/2002

The European Commission has published its last Strategy Paper which highlights the processes to be accomplished before the integration of 10 new Member States. The Commission considers that Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia fulfil the political criteria and will have fulfilled the economic and acquis criteria within the timeframe foreseen for accession by the European Council. These countries will be ready for membership from the beginning of 2004. The Commission recommends concluding the accession negotiations with these countries by the end of this year with the aim of signing the Accession Treaty in Spring 2003. As for Bulgaria and Romania, the Commission will strongly support these two countries in achieving their objective to join in 2007. In addition to assessing progress made by each candidate, the Regular Reports and the Strategy Paper also evaluate to what extent the candidates will fulfil the Copenhagen criteria by accession, taking into account the envisaged timeframe for enlargement defined by the European Council. - Concerning the accession negotiations : the Commission therefore recommends to conclude the accession negotiations with these countries by the end of this year. The Regular Reports point to a number of areas where further improvements need to be made in the context of the political and economic criteria and in relationship to the adoption, implementation and enforcement of the acquis. These should be vigorously pursued. For all ten acceding countries, negotiations on both the chapters "agriculture" and "financial and budgetary matters" are not yet provisionally closed, although most issues in these chapters which are not linked to the financial framework to be proposed by the Union have been dealt with. Moreover, even if the chapters "regional policy" and "institutions" have been provisionally closed, specific questions linked respectively to the budgetary allocations and to institutional matters have been reserved for the last stretch of negotiations. In principle and in line with a practice followed in previous enlargements, it will not be possible to go beyond a certain point in time when considering new acquis in the negotiations. The Commission therefore has proposed to limit the scope of the negotiations as such to all

acquis adopted and published up until 1 November 2002. - Overcoming difficulties : the 2002 Regular Reports show that, overall, candidate countries have generally reached a high degree of alignment in many areas, as a result of the considerable progress in transposing the acquis over the last years. Moreover, commitments made in the negotiations are generally being fulfilled. However, some difficulties are still apparent in areas such as customs, agriculture (very few candidate countries are at an advanced stage regarding the setting up of the integrated administration and control scheme (IACS)), regional policy (reinforce their administrative capacities) and financial management and control. The Commission's assessment of candidate countries in this year's Regular Reports carries three important messages: the Union's pre-accession strategy has proved a success. The transformation process in the candidate countries has been considerably accelerated by the prospect of enlargement; the accession negotiations, which have been based on theprinciples of own merits, differentiation and catching up, can be concluded with most candidates by the end of 2002. Preparations for enlargement will continue; and enlargement is an inclusive process which is not yet completed with the first accessions. The European Union continues to give its full support to current candidates that will not be in a position to participate in the next wave of enlargement. - With regard to the process of reinforcing administrative and judicial capacity : the Commission attaches the greatest importance to ensuring that the candidates further reinforce their administrative and judicial capacity. It is an essential requirement for creating mutual trust among Member States, indispensable for membership. The Commission has prepared in the first quarter of 2002 jointly with each negotiating country an Action Plan to reinforce their administrative and judicial capacity. Based on the 2002 Accession Partnership priorities, the Action Plans identify the concrete measures that remain to be taken for each country to achieve an adequate level of administrative capacity by the time of accession. The Action Plans identify targeted assistance required to support the countries in their efforts. For that purpose, the Commission has mobilised additional financial assistance of up to EUR 250 million in 2002 to accompany these efforts, bringing the Community's total support to strengthen the administrative and judicial capacity of the negotiating countries in 2002 to around EUR 1 billion. - Regarding transitional arrangements : the process of building up administrative and judicial capacity will need to continue after enlargement. A number of transitional arrangements agreed in the negotiations also demonstrate that in certain areas candidate countries need to continue efforts until they are in a position to apply fully the Community acquis. While accession negotiations are based on the principle that candidate countries effectively apply the acquis upon accession, a number of well-justified transitional measures have been agreed in the negotiations, in line with the principles laid down for transitional measures. These principles state that any transitional measure has to be limited in time and scope and be accompanied by a plan clearly defining stages for the application of the acquis. In addition, transitional measures must not involve amendments to the rules and policies of the Union, disrupt their proper functioning, or lead to significant distortions of competition. Transitional measures have been agreed, upon request of both the candidate countries (some 190 requests accepted so far) and the Union (some 28 requests accepted so far). - As regards the safeguard clauses : the general economic safeguard clause applies to situations where "difficulties arise which are serious and liable to persist in any sector of the economy or which could bring about serious deterioration in the economic situation of a given area". The safeguard clause would allow the Commission to determine the necessary protective measures. Both, new and current Member States would be able to make use of this safeguard clause. In order to ensure a smooth phasing in of an unprecedented number of new Member States in EU policies, the Commission considers, that for a limited time, the Accession Treaty should envisage the introduction of a specific safeguard clause for the internal market (including food safety)and also in the area of justice and home affairs, allowing to react more flexibly to possible problems associated with the initial period of membership. Moreover, the particular situation in the area of Justice and Home Affairs deserves a special mention. There is now a considerable acquis in this area. It covers difficult and politically sensitive subjects, in particular where the freedom of movement of people and the consequences of the suppression of internal frontiers are concerned. The implementation of these Schengen-based objectives is subject to a two-stage process, which eliminates the need for any separate safeguard mechanism. There are, however, other non-Schengen components in the area of freedom, security and justice (for instance regarding the implementation of judicial cooperation, in particular mutual recognition) which are still causing problems. - Concerning the abolition of border controls and free movement : the EU has made clear that full application of the Schengen acquis necessitates a process in two stages. In the first stage (2004) the countries will need to have achieved a high level of border control, even though certain special arrangements such as shared infrastructure and equipment or joint patrols could be envisaged with other Member States. The lifting of internal border controls will only occur some time after accession and will be subject to a separate decision making process for each new Member State separately. - With regard to the EMU and the Euro : the new Member States cannot immediately adopt the Euro upon accession. However, as for all Member States, economic policies become a matter of common concern and hence are subject to policy co-ordination and multilateral surveillance procedures. Until that time, the Treaty obliges Member States to pursue the high degree of sustainable convergence required for the adoption of the euro, but does not specify the timetable to attain this. - Concerning the timetable : six months before the envisaged date of accession the Commission will produce a comprehensive monitoring report for the Council and the European Parliament which will look at the advancement of the implementation of necessary reforms and all commitments in the field of the Community acquis by each of the acceding countries. The Commission should adopt its Opinion on the applications for accession of the concerned countries. The European Parliament should then be asked to give its assent, followed by a decision of the Council on the admission of new Member States. Provided that the Commission can issue its Opinion in February 2003, and allowing sufficient time for the decision making process in Parliament and Council, the Accession Treaty can be expected to be signed in spring 2003. Thereafter, the Treaty, drawn up in all present and future Community languages, will be signed by the parties. - With regard to the financial framework : the Commission has proposed a common financial framework for the accession negotiations. This framework was based on the overall Berlin financial framework and on the assumption that ten new Member States would join the European Union (refer to INI /2002/2045). The Commission's proposals remain valid. In particular, the Commission considers that in the field of agriculture, the objective of gradually introducing direct payments for farmers in the new Member States from the year 2004 should be maintained.Structural actions should be based on a share of one third for the cohesion fund and be based on the overall volume proposed in January 2002. Also a temporary budgetary compensation, through a lump sum payment, should be envisaged for each new Member State which would find itself in a net budgetary position which is worse in comparison with its situation in the year before accession as beneficiary of pre-accession funds. Lastly, the Commission reiterates the need to earmark additional funds for the northern part of Cyprus in order to back a political settlement.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 15/07/1997 - Supplementary non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: AGENDA 2000: presentation of the Commission's opinion on the Czech Republic's request for membership (17 January 1996).
CONTENT: All the requests for membership were assessed using a single method based on the criteria established at the Copenhagen European Council (June 1993). These criteria are as follows: - political criteria: the candidate countries must have stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, human rights and respect for minorities, - economic criteria: these countries must have a functioning market economy, as well as the ability to cope

with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union, - criteria relating to the ability of the countries to take on the obligations of membership (in particular integration of the acquis, to a greater or lesser extent, and respect for the criteria concerning economic and monetary union). With regard to these criteria, it is emerges that: 1) in political terms, the Czech Republic presents the characteristics of a democracy, with stable institutions guaranteeing the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; 2) in economic terms, the Czech Republic can be regarded as a functioning market economy, and it should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the medium term; 3) with regard to its capacity to take on the obligations of membership, this country should continue to transpose and implement the acquis. The Commission considers that the Czech Republic should be capable, in particular with regard to the single market, of applying the acquis fully in the medium term. However, certain questions will have to be resolved, such as the import deposit scheme established by this country which is contrary to the provisions of the agreement between the European Union and the Czech Republic. Particular efforts including investment are needed in sectors such as environment, agriculture and energy. Strengthening of structures is needed in company management, the financial system and the tax system. The banking sector is dominated by a few, partly state-owned, banks and its competitive position is not strong. Further work is needed on audiovisual regulations and customs. In general, further administrative reform will be indispensable if the country is to have the necessary structures to apply and enforce the acquis fully. In conclusion, the Commission considers that negotiations for accession can be opened with the Czech Republic. The pre-accession strategy will help this country to prepare itself rapidly for the obligations of membership.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 15/04/1999 - Interim resolution adopted by Parliament

The Parliament adopted its resolution, drafted by Mr. Carlos CARNERO GONZALES (GUE, Spain) concerning the Czech Republic's progress towards EU accession. The resolution calls for the accession process to be speeded up and welcomes the national consensus in the country favouring EU membership. It notes the concerns about the position of the Roma minority and calls on the Czech government to repeal laws from 1945 and 1946 relating to the expulsion of individual ethnic groups. It also expresses its concern that there needs to be greater progress in the fields of administrative and judicial reform and the privatisation of state banks.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 04/10/2000 - Interim resolution adopted by Parliament

The European Parliament adopted the report by Mr Jürgen SCHRODER (EPP/ED, D) on the Czech Republic's membership to the EU and the state of the negotiations. This resolution acknowledges the recent efforts made by the Czech government to speed up the process of aligning its legislation with the acquis. However, there is still concern over environmental standards and the government's attempt to postpone liberalisation of the telecommunications market until the end of 2002. Furthermore, the Parliament calls on the Czech government and authorities: - to establish the appropriate structures and institutions for a successful implementation of integration policies and to closely involve local authorities in such policies; - to take effective action to combat against sex tourism, child prostitution and trafficking in women.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 29/01/1996

Following the application to join the European Union submitted by the Czech Republic (17 January 1996), the Council decided to implement the procedure provided for in the Treaty and ask the Commission to draw up its opinion on this application. The President of the Council will write to the authorities of the Czech Republic to inform them of this decision.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 13/11/2001 - Supplementary non-legislative basic document

AIM: To present the regular report for 2001 from the Commission on the Czech Republic's progress towards accession. CONTENT: For the fourth consecutive year, the Commission will be presenting its annual report on the progress made by the Czech Republic towards accession to the European Union. Like the previous reports, the latest document provides a clear and structured appraisal of the degree to which the Czech Republic has brought its policies into line with the so-called 'Copenhagen criteria', in other words the extent to which it now fulfils the political and economic criteria for accession and the steps it has taken to adapt to the established laws and practice of the European Community (the acquis communautaire). The part of the report dealing with the latter requirement devotes special attention to the creation of the judicial and administrative capacities that are necessary for the introduction and application of the acquis communautaire, which is the real keystone of the Czech Republic's case for accession to the Union. The present report also examines whether the reforms specified in the report for the year 2000 have been effectively implemented. As in previous reports, progress is measured by the yardstick of the Czech Republic's 'own merits', in other words by the decisions it has actually taken and the measures it has implemented. TOWARDS ACCESSION: Since June 2001, negotiations have been launched on all the chapters of the acquis except the chapter on the EU institutions and miscellaneous other points. Additional discussions are also expected in 2002 in three fundamental policy areas, namely agriculture, regional policy and budgetary and financial provisions. - As far as pre-accession aid is concerned, the three financial instruments of the Community - PHARE, ISPA and Sapard - are now up to speed and have been focusing their support on the priorities established by the Accession Partnership. In the course of the period from 2000 to 2002, the total amount of annual financial assistance granted to the Czech Republic will be EUR 79 million under PHARE, EUR 22 m under Sapard and between EUR 55 m and 80 m for ISPA, which finances infrastructure projects in the realms of the environment and transport. - As far as the three main Copenhagen criteria are concerned, the report provides a comprehensive assessment of progress made by the Czech Republic towards accession in each domain: 1. Political criteria. Since 1997, the country

has made considerable progress, further consolidating the stability of the institutions that are guarantors of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for, and protection of, minorities. In the course of the year 2000, fresh efforts have been made in this direction, and the Czech Republic continues to fulfil the political criteria established in Copenhagen. One remaining defect, however, is that the country is still without a Civil Service Act to regulate its public administration. Reform of the judicial system has made good progress, as has the reform of civil law. Efforts are continuing in the field of criminal law and with regard to the reorganisation of the courts and of the judicial structure in general. It is worth highlighting the special attention that has been devoted to the fight against corruption and economic crime as well as the high priority attaching to the eradication of trafficking in women and children. Considerable efforts have been made by the government with regard to the Roma, but a package of new measures is still required to combat discrimination. 2. Economic criteria. The Czech Republic has a functioning market economy. Provided that it steps up its efforts to achieve medium-term consolidation of the budget and that it completes the implementation of its structural reforms, it should have the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the near future. The performance of the Czech economy has improved, as have its growth and inflation rates. The Czech Government is currently trying to achieve greater fiscal transparency and to complete the radical restructuring of its corporate sector. Nevertheless, the current-account deficit has widened considerably. The medium-term sustainability of public finances is not yet assured, and the process of disposing of the banks' bad loans has still to be undertaken. There is also a need to restructure the remaining major state enterprises. 3. Alignment of Czech legislation with Community law and practice. The Czech Republic has made significant progress in a wide range of chapters of the acquis communautaire. Nevertheless, further efforts are still required in a number of areas: - In the domain of the single market, numerous remaining gaps need to be filled. As far as free movement of persons is concerned, transposition needs to be accelerated, in particular as regards mutual recognition of professional qualifications. More rapid transposition is also required in the area of free movement of services. With regard to free movement of capital, existing anonymous accounts remain to be abolished. Progress has generally been good in the domain of competition. The law on industrial and intellectual property rights, on the other hand, is not yet being adequately enforced. - In the realm of agriculture, there has been good legislative progress in the phytosanitary field. However, further work on alignment is required in the veterinary area. Good progress has been made in setting up the State Agricultural Intervention Fund, but further efforts are needed to reorganise the Ministry of Agriculture. - On regional policy, the legal framework for the future implementation of the structural funds is closer to completion. However, additional efforts are needed to ensure that the bodies responsible for administering the funds are fully functional and that their staff are trained. - As regards social policy and employment, alignment has progressed on equal treatment, labour law and health and safety at work. - In the environmental domain, transposition has progressed well. Coordination amongst the relevant government bodies needs to be improved, with particular attention to the implications of the ongoing process of decentralisation. - In the field of justice and home affairs, particularly good progress has been made in the alignment of visa and migration policies and in strengthening the legal framework for police and judicial cooperation. However, significant further efforts are needed to implement government policies for combating organised crime and 'white collar' crime. As regards border control, while the overall situation has improved, there are still significant difficulties in intercepting illegal immigrants from Slovakia. - Concerning financial and budgetary provisions, the internal scrutiny of public finances has improved, but further efforts are needed to develop a comprehensive system of control. 4. Administrative capacity. Overall, the administrative capacity of the Czech Republic is being strengthened, and efforts in this direction need to be pursued, in particular as regards agriculture, the environment, regional policy and border controls. The same applies with regard to the control and administration of Community funds. 5. The Accession partnership. The Czech Republic has been tackling the vast majority of the Accession Partnership priorities established in 1999. It has virtually achieved its short-term priority objectives relating to the single market, although further efforts are needed in some areas. Progress on the medium-term priorities has been more limited.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 08/11/2000 - Supplementary non-legislative basic document

This Regular Report for 2000 on the Czech Republic is largely similar to that of the Commission's 1997 Opinion and subsequent reports; however, it differs from that of the previous years on three minor points. Firstly, the part of the present report assessing the Czech Republic's ability to assume the obligations of membership has been structured to follow the list of 29 negotiating chapters covering the acquis. Secondly, this part has been broadened to cover also the Czech Republic's administrative capacity to apply the acquis under each of the negotiating chapters (previously discussed in a separate section of the report). Thirdly, the report includes, for the first time, a section assessing the progress made by the Czech Republic in translating the acquis into its official language. This report takes into consideration progress since the 1999 regular report and looks at whether intended reforms referred to in the 1999 report have been carried out and it also examines new initiatives. With regard to the relations between the EU and the Czech Republic, it has continued to implement the Europe Agreement and contributed to the smooth functioning of the various joint institutions. In September 2000, an agreement of principle was reached on the move to the second stage of the transitional period of the Europe Agreement, indicating that the Czech Republic has further aligned its legislation on establishment and movement of capital with Community rules. Trade between the EU and the Czech Republic has continued to increase. As far as Community aid is concerned, in the years 2000-2002 total financial assistance to the Czech Republic will amount annually to EUR 79 million for Phare, EUR 22 million for SAPARD and between EUR 55 and EUR 80 million for ISPA. It should be noted that the Czech Republic continues to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria. Recent significant developments include, in particular, a more effective collaboration between the government and Parliament. There has been progress in setting the legal framework for regional government. However, the reform of the public administration has not advanced significantly and therefore the short term priority of the Accession Partnership in this field has not been met. Furthermore, the fight against corruption and economic crime has so far been insufficient. Although the Czech Republic continues to respect human rights and freedoms and has developed its internal institutional framework in this field, there are still areas of concern such as overcrowding of the prison system and persistence of trafficking in women and children. Areas in which progress has been made include the situation of the Roma community, the market economy, the macroeconomic stability, restructuring and privatisation of banks, the internal market, free movement of goods, employment and social affairs, economic and social cohesion, intellectual property, innovation, transport, industry and agriculture. On the other hand, further progress is needed in areas such as the financial sector, audiovisual policy, the environment, and justice and home affairs.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 13/10/1999

This second composite document, like the first in the series, provides a resumé of the regular reports prepared for all accession candidate countries. Although the main areas covered, the methodology and the analysis of the progress made by all the candidate countries remain the same, the Commission's formal conclusions on a country by country basis differ from those in the 1998 report. Firstly, the Commission recalls that the enlargement process is a complex one which is not simply confined to pure and simple integration of new countries in the Union. Besides the difficulties associated with integration both for the Union and the countries themselves, the Commission considers that the newconfiguration of 25-30 countries will require not only internal but also external changes. In particular, it considers that the development of Europe has inevitable consequences with respect to the Eastern countries that are not yet on the 'candidate list' (ex-Yugoslavian countries, Albania, in the first instance), but also further East with Russia and the Ukraine, with which relations will have to be accorded a new dimension. The Commission considers that the new configuration envisaged also implies a modification in Europe's approach with respect to the South and in particular the countries of North Africa in respect of which new responsibilities are developing. On another level, the Commission considers that the enlargement negotiations should be started with all the candidate countries (thus abandoning the 'in' and 'non-in' idea) that satisfy the political Copenhagen criteria and can prove that they are ready to take the necessary measures to satisfy the economic criteria. In the current state of affairs, the Commission considers that the following countries should be in the first line to start negotiations : Bulgaria, Malta, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia. In this document, the Commission also outlines the method that it intends to apply to open negotiations with each of the countries concerned. In taking account of the progress made by each candidate country in its preparation for membership, the Commission will open one (or several) chapters for negotiation based on the principle of differentiation (certain chapters for certain countries in function of progress in given fields of the acquis). The chapters left in suspense in the framework of the negotiations under way, will be reviewed afterwards taking into account the progress of the country in these fields. The provisional closing of certain chapters will also depend on the extent to which the candidate country has undertaken its commitments in preparing for membership. Furthermore, the Commission considers that membership can only take place if the institutional reform has taken place by the end of 2002. The Commission also considers that the Union should undertake to be in a position to decide by that date on the eventual membership of candidates that fulfil the required criteria. Lastly, during 2000, the situation of all candidates from the point of view of the application of the competition regime and internal market rules should be reviewed, as well as that of the liberalisation of trade in agricultural products.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 06/12/1999 - Document attached to the procedure

PURPOSE: presentation of the second 'accession partnership' for the Czech Republic. CONTENT : Like its previous version, this partnership for the accession of the Czech Republic resembles a work programme proposing priorities and objectives to be attained by the country in the short and the medium-term in order to become a member of the Union. These objectives take into account the regular report on the Czech Republic (1999). The short-term priorities (end of 2000) concern political criteria (introduction of a programme for the Roma people backed up with sufficient financial resources), economic criteria (restructuring of the banking and the steel sectors) ; the internal market (basically continuing the harmonisation process) ; agriculture, transport, environment (introduction of framework legislation), social affairs and employment, justice and home affairs (implementation of the Schengen agreement and combating corruption) and the strengthening of administrative and judiciary capacity (in particular the management and control of EU funds). In the medium term, the measures will concern further efforts to resolve the Roma question. In the area of the single market, the complete liberalisation of public procurement and harmonisation in the area of free movement of goods, taxation and consumer protection. Further measures are envisaged in the area of agriculture, energy (in particular, the nuclear sector), transport and the environment (sustainable development) and the improved operation of the customs and legal systems. With regard to the programming of financial resources, the partnership confirms aid granted in line with AGENDA 2000 and the various instruments provided therein (Phare, SAPARD and ISPA) in accordance with the rules already foreseen. It should be noted that assistance is only granted if the country respects the provisions of the EC-Czech Republic Association Agreement, makes progress towards satisfying the Copenhagen criteria and assures in the year 2000 the achievement of the specific priorities of this accession partnership.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 17/12/1998 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to present the regular report from the Commission on the Czech Republic's progress towards accession. CONTENT: In line with the timetable of Agenda 2000 and the direction given by the European Council in Cardiff, the Commission presents a report in the form of an appraisal of the progress made by this country with regard to accession. The report examines: - the relations between the Czech Republic and the EU, particularly in the framework of the European Agreement; - the situation in respect of the political conditions set by theEuropean Council (democracy, rule of law, human rights, protection of minorities); - the Czech Republic's situation and prospects in respect of the economic conditions mentioned by the European Council (functioning market economy, capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union); - the question of Czech Republic's capacity to adopt the obligations of membership, that is, the acquis of the Union as expressed in the Treaty, the secondary legislation and the policies of the Union. The Commission assesses the Czech Republic's results in economic and political terms as satisfactory : Czech institutions are stable although it needs to devote continuing attention to the reform of the judiciary, to fighting corruption more effectively and to improving the situation of the Roma. It can be regarded as a functioning market economy and should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the medium term, provided that it improves corporate governance and accelerates enterprise restructuring. Priority should now also be given to further reform of the financial sector (privatisation of the banking sector, expedient implementation of changes to the banking acts, cleaning up of bank portfolios, increasing the transparency and effectiveness of capital markets). With regard to adoption of the acquis, the Czech Republic has made only little progress in the overall approximation process. Although it started from a solid base, no progress has been made in certain key internal market areas such as intellectual property, public procurement, data protection, audio-visual, insurance and state aid control. The slow down in the approximation and institution building process has been equally felt in the field of justice and home affairs and the agricultural sector, where further efforts are needed in the phytosanitary and veterinary fields. In terms of administrative capacity to apply the acquis, the Czech Republic has not yet taken the necessary steps to translate its political commitment to reform public administration as a matter of priority into concrete actions. Significant efforts are needed, in particular, in training and career development in the judiciary and in the agricultural sector. In

conclusion, the Czech Republic has a mixed record in terms of meeting the short term Accession Partnership priorities. Important priorities were not satisfactorily addressed in a number of sectors. Once the Czech authorities have revised the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis, the Commission will take a position on the document which it will communicate to the Council during the second half of 1999 at the time of the re-examination of the Accession Partnership.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 17/12/1998

This composite paper presents an outline of the progress made towards accession by all of the candidate countries in relation to the Copenhagen criteria since the publication of the Commission's opinions in June 1997. These regular reports for each of the candidate countries concentrate on all aspects of the adoption of the Community acquis and establish a precise assessment of the capacity of each of the candidates to fulfil the political and economic criteria required for accession. In its general conclusion, the composite paper indicates that, whatever the place of the candidate countries in the accession process and in the negotiations, much remains to be done in order to fully conform to the Community acquis. In this respect, whether considering the "in" countries (those who will qualify for accession in the next wave) or the "pre-in" countries (those who have not been selected), the difference is not very important. Overall, the Commission's analysis of the progress achieved by each of the candidate countries since June 1997 has not persuaded it to amend its general assessment of the candidacies. Therefore, it does not consider it necessary, on the basis of the reports being presented, to make new recommendations "on the conduct or extension of the negotiations", as envisaged by the European Council. Nonetheless, the Commission stresses the increasing importance of revising the national programmes for the adoption of the acquis in order to further accelerate the process of alignment with European legislation and to strengthen the administrative capacity of the candidate countries, with a view to efficiently implementing all the regulations necessary for admission to the Union. The document ends by specifying that the preparatory measures undertaken must determine for now, the assistance of the Union to these countries and, subsequently, the timetable for the first accessions. For this reason, the Commission intends to submit further progress reports to the Council at the end of 1999 to allow it, if appropriate, to take decisions on the conduct or extension of the negotiations.

Czech Republic: membership application and partnership, 17 January 1996

1997/2180(COS) - 08/11/2000

The Commission has presented for the first time a 'strategy document for enlargement' which seeks to be more analytical and forward-looking than its previous versions issued in 1998 and 1999. In the first part, the Commission recalls the challenges of the future enlargement, in particular in geopolitical and strategic terms, which go far beyond those faced in previous enlargements: Europe's improved security, stability and prosperity will be top priority in the complex negotiations which will result in the membership of between 10 and 13 new member states. The Commission also discusses the new potential candidates for membership from the Balkans area which will be declared in the relatively near future. A process in parallel to that started in 1989 for the current candidates from Central and Eastern Europe is under way in this region so as to prepare the countries of the former Yugoslavia and Albania for future membership: this involves a stabilisation and association process coupling financial and technical support, as well as strengthening the political dialogue between the parties. In recalling the various elements that comprise the pre-accession strategy (accession partnerships; national programmes for the adoption of the acquis communautaire; more than 3 billion euros per year of financial assistance with PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD; association agreements that set the institutional framework and the structural objectives of pre-accession; involvement of the candidate countries in the various Community programmes and agencies), the Commission presents a state of play sector-by-sector of the progress made by the candidates on the path to accession. The Copenhagen criteria (political, economic, adoption of the acquis) are reviewed in the second part of the document in order to determine for each country concerned the work that remains to be done before becoming a member of the Union. The Commission describes, in a third and important part of the section, the negotiation strategy that it intends to implement in the course of the next two years (2001-2002). In this regard, the Commission stresses the need to respect the timetable for the negotiations, considering that it is not in the interests of either the Union or the candidate countries to see the enlargement process get bogged down indefinitely. This is why a strategy in stages is proposed in order both to encourage the candidate countries to intensify their preparation efforts and to give them greater confidence in the process under way. This strategy involves the following stages: 1) the drawing up of a lists of candidate countries' requests for transitional measures and negotiation of these measures by making, on the EU side, a clear distinction between measures considered acceptable (basically transitional measures in the short term of a technical nature that do not pose a particular problem), negotiable (measures having an effect on competition or the internal market and a longer duration), and unacceptable (posing very fundamental problems in the context of membership); 2) the drawing up of a detailed 'road map'for each country laying down clearly the order in which pending questions should be dealt with in 2001-2002. The road map is, without doubt, the most innovative aspect of the planned negotiation method since it involves for all the parties an undertaking to finishnegotiations within a realistic timescale. The approach favoured by the Commission is one in two phases: 2001 will see the majority of the pending questions raised (mainly, the internal market, social questions, environment) with the exception of those which have the most important financial implications; these latter will be dealt with in the course of the first six months of 2002, with the 'institutional questions' chapter and the other unresolved matters (agriculture, in particular). A clear list of chapters for negotiation that must be tackled is presented in the Commission's document, breaking down the most important questions to be resolved into 3 semesters (up to June 2002); 3) the opening of negotiating chapters: it is up to the candidate countries to open negotiating chapters as a function of the timing proposed by the Commission in its road map. Certain countries that are already well advanced would be able, by virtue of the principle of differentiation, to pursue their negotiations at a more sustained rhythm and hope to be part of the first cluster of new member states. However, where the number of remaining problems is very limited, these can be put aside provisionally to be revisted in order to find a solution to the few remaining issues at the appropriate moment. In conclusion, and in virtue of the method proposed in this working document, the Commission considers that Union should be in a position to welcome new Member States from the end of 2002.