Basic information

2003/2202(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Bulgaria's progress towards accession. Strategy paper and 2003 report **Subject** 8.20.01 Candidate countries **Geographical area** Bulgaria	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security, Defense	VAN ORDEN Geoffrey (PPE-DE)	07/10/2003

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
BUDG Budgets	BÖGE Reimer (PPE-DE)	16/12/2003
JURI Legal Affairs and Internal Market	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
ITRE Industry, External Trade, Research, Energy	VAN VELZEN W.G. (PPE-DE)	20/10/2003
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	SMET Miet (PPE-DE) ETTL Harald (PSE)	22/10/2003 22/10/2003
ENVI Environment, Public Health, Consumer Policy		
AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development	OLSSON Karl Erik (ELDR)	04/11/2003
RETT Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism	MASTORAKIS Emmanouil (PSE)	25/11/2003
FEMM Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities	LULLING Astrid (PPE-DE)	12/11/2003

Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meetings	Date
	General Affairs	2540	2003-11-17

European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner
	Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
05/11/2003	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2003)0676	Summary
17/11/2003	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
28/01/2004	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
19/02/2004	Vote in committee		Summary
19/02/2004	Committee report tabled for plenary	A5-0105/2004	
10/03/2004	Debate in Parliament		
11/03/2004	Decision by Parliament	T5-0181/2004	Summary
11/03/2004	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2003/2202(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55 Rules of Procedure EP 148-p2
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/5/20304

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A5-0105/2004	19/02/2004	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T5-0181/2004 OJ C 102 28.04.2004, p. 0652-0846 E	11/03/2004	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2003)0676	05/11/2003	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2003)1210	05/11/2003	Summary

Bulgaria's progress towards accession. Strategy paper and 2003 report

2003/2202(INI) - 05/11/2003 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to present the strategy paper on the progress towards accession by Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. CONTENT : the Commission has adopted the Regular Reports on the efforts made by Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey in view of satisfying the accession criteria by 2007. This year's Regular Reports show that the Bulgaria and Romania have continued to make significant progress over the last year in implementing the accession criteria. They continue to fulfil the political criteria and are closer to fulfilling the economic and acquis criteria. Accession negotiations with Bulgaria and Romania will continue on the same basis and principles that applied to the ten acceding states, in particular the own merits principle. As in the past, the pace of the negotiations will be determined principally by progress made by the negotiating countries in incorporating the acquis into their legislation and in building the capacity to implement and enforce it effectively. The Commission will continue to monitor the fulfilment of the negotiating countries' commitments. The Union's stated objective is to welcome Bulgaria and Romania as members in 2007, depending on further progress in complying with the membership criteria. This objective must remain the firm focus of these two countries' preparations and the Commission will support them in achieving this goal. In order for accession to take place in 2007, a common Accession Treaty for Bulgaria and Romania should be signed at the latest towards the end of 2005, which would require that the negotiations be finalised in due time before that. This is to be preceded by the Commission's final recommendation on the readiness of Bulgaria and Romania for accession. The Thessaloniki European Council supported Bulgaria and Romania in their efforts to achieve the objective of concluding negotiations in 2004, inviting them to step up their preparations on the ground. Meeting this objective will depend on the real progress made on the ground and in the negotiating process on the basis of each country's own merits. The Commission will present to the Council, at the beginning of 2004, a three-year common financial framework for the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in order to prepare the ground for the completion of negotiations. In line with the conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council, discussions or agreement on future policy reforms, or the new financial perspective, shall neither impede the pursuit and conclusion of accession negotiations nor be prejudged by the outcome of these negotiations. The Commission considers that in order to ensure fairness vis-à-vis both present and future acceding countries and to simplify the negotiations, this financial framework should be based on the principles and methodology developed for the negotiations with the ten acceding countries. On this basis, the Commission will then propose to the Council common negotiation positions dealing with the financial implications in the fields of agriculture, regional policy and budgetary issues.

Bulgaria's progress towards accession. Strategy paper and 2003 report

2003/2202(INI) - 05/11/2003 - Document attached to the procedure

PURPOSE : to present the Commission's Regular Report on the progress towards accession made by Bulgaria in 2003. CONTENT : this report on the progress made by Bulgaria in 2003 in meeting the membership criteria can be summarised as follows: 1) Political Criteria : Bulgaria continues to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria. Progress was made in the area of the modernisation of the State Administration but sustained efforts will be necessary to further implement the public administration reform and to fulfil Bulgaria's aim to have a qualified and efficient civil service in place in the medium term, to ensure the effective application and enforcement of the acquis when Bulgaria joins the Union. The overall reform process for the judiciary regarding in particular the status of magistrates represent an important step forward. Other legislative measures aim at reducing the duration of court proceedings and strengthening judicial control of decisions of the executive. However, further efforts are necessary to re-organise the investigation service as part of the executive in line with best practice in Member States. Bulgaria also needs to ensure that the judicial budget is adequate for the smooth functioning of the judicial system. Corruption remains a problem, and Bulgaria should maintain concerted efforts to implement measures in this respect. Bulgaria continues to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. The legal framework for asylum and child protection improved considerably. However, the living conditions of children placed in institutions changed little during the past year. As regards the mentally disabled, the required legal framework is still missing, notably to ban arbitrary detention. Despite some efforts to address the situation, the living conditions in institutions for mentally disabled are difficult and opportunities for rehabilitation and therapy are scarce. Further efforts are necessary to address the situation as regards degrading treatment by the police and trafficking in human beings. In the area of social and economic rights, progress can be reported notably as regards equal opportunities and anti-discrimination. The new Action Plan for the implementation of the "Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma into Bulgarian Society" represents a positive step, as specific budgetary support is provided for measures in the areas of anti-discrimination, education, culture, housing, employment and social protection. Determined and sustained efforts are needed to fight discriminatory attitudes and behaviour and to address the widespread social disadvantage affecting the Roma community. 2) Economic Criteria : Bulgaria is a functioning market economy. It should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the near term, provided that it continues implementing its reform programme to remove remaining difficulties. The Bulgarian economy has achieved a high degree of macroeconomic stability due to a good policy-mix brought about by the currency board arrangement, a tight fiscal stance and wage moderation. Economic stability and good progress in structural reforms allow market mechanisms to provide a more efficient allocation of resources which, in the absence of the nominal exchange rate as an instrument for adjustment, is setting the basis for a process of sustained growth. However, the flexibility of product and labour markets needs to be further enhanced. In particular, the efficiency of the administrative and judicial system has to be improved, providing economic agents a more stable and predictable framework and better allow to enforce their property rights. The privatisation programme

needs to be completed. Regulations and administrative procedures affecting enterprises must be further streamlined, also to provide more viable conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises. The restructuring and liberalisation of the network industries needs to further advance in order to reduce subsidies, to enhance quality and allow for a reduction of the prices of their services. The ongoing reduction in unemployment should be further supported by addressing rigidities in the labour market and improving the education system. Implementing these reform measures should contribute to higher levels of private and public investment, thereby contributing to sustained growth and competitiveness within the Union. 3) Transposition of the acquis : over the past year, Bulgaria has continued to make good progress in most areas of the acquis and is on track to complete the required legislative transposition before the planned date of accession if the current pace of progress is maintained. However, as regards free movement of persons, progress was limited and considerable further work is needed concerning mutual recognition of qualifications (especially as regards curricula and training requirements) and the establishment of the necessary administrative bodies for the future co-ordination of social security systems. Concerning the right of establishment and freedom to provide services, Bulgaria made further progress as regards the non-discriminatory regime of national treatment for foreigners performing economic activities in Bulgaria. The establishment of the Financial Supervision Commission is an important step towards strengthening supervision. Further efforts are required as regards data protection and information-society services. In the area of free movement of capital, Bulgaria has made good progress in adopting new legislation on capital movements and payments, and anti-money laundering. Regarding agriculture, Bulgaria has made considerable progress in adopting legislation in particular in the veterinary and phytosanitary sector. Reforms in the energy sector progressed. It must continue to respect its commitments on nuclear safety, notably as regards closure commitments for Kozloduy nuclear power plant and to ensure a high level of nuclear safety in its installations. Bulgaria has reached a good level of alignment of the environmental acquis and has developed directive-specific implementation plans and financing strategies. The continuous efforts to develop administrative capacities, notably at local level, and further elaborate mechanisms to monitor effective implementation should be maintained. Further good progress could be noted in the area of justice and home affairs. Substantial further efforts are needed to further strengthen the judicial system, through a continuation of the reforms. Particular attention should be given to combating drugs and illegal migration. In conclusion, Bulgaria needs to continue to make sustained efforts to develop sufficient administrative and judicialcapacity to implement and enforce the acquis. As well as continuing horizontal reform of the public administration, it needs to focus in particular on developing the capacity to be part of the internal market and to apply the acquis in areas such as agriculture, environment and regional policy. Continued efforts are required to establish the necessary administrative capacity to ensure the sound and efficient management of EU funds.

Bulgaria's progress towards accession. Strategy paper and 2003 report

2003/2202(INI) - 11/03/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based upon the own-initiative report drafted by Geoffrey VAN ORDEN (EPP-ED, UK) on Bulgaria's progress towards accession. Bulgaria's EU membership negotiations are proceeding without any major problems and are well on schedule. Parliament believes the negotiations could be concluded early in 2004 and insisted that the date of Bulgaria's accession should not necessarily be linked to that of any other candidate country, i.e. Romania. It welcomed in particular the constitutional reform as an important catalyst for substantial administrative and judicial reform. The adoption of anti-corruption legislation was seen as a positive step, although more systematic measures against fraud and bribery were deemed necessary, as was more progress in enforcing anti-corruption measures. MEPs also welcomed the improved legislation and concrete measures for the protection of children. Nevertheless, they pointed out that living conditions in children's homes need to be improved substantially and they voiced concern at the imminent closure of the State Agency for Child Protection. As many of the children in care are from the Roma community, it is clear that more action is required to overcome barriers between the Roma community and the wider society. However, MEPs recognised that this was not simply a question of discrimination, but rather a two-way process. They encouraged the Bulgarian authorities to persevere in their efforts to promote the integration of Roma, while calling on Roma representatives to identify social and structural problems in the Roma way of life and to help implement measures which will facilitate Roma integration into the wider Bulgarian society. Parliament welcomed the substantial investments made to improve safety at the Kozloduy nuclear power plant. It called on Bulgaria to respect its closure commitments for Kozloduy and asked Council and Commission to consider providing further funds for the decommissioning of units 3 and 4. Among issues still to be addressed by the Bulgarian authorities are the continuation of trafficking in human beings, real progress on gender equality, the need for improvement of the legal aid system, abolition of the requirement for EU nationals to have a permanent residence permit if they want to work in Bulgaria and the 2003 law on religious denominations, which the Commission was asked to investigate with regard to its compatibility with international conventions on fundamental freedoms.