Basic information

2006/2252(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Enlargement strategy and main challenges 2006-2007: the institutional aspects of the European Union's capacity to integrate new Member States **Subject** 8.20 Enlargement of the Union 8.20.01 Candidate countries 8.20.06 Institutional reform and enlargement	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	BROK Elmar (PPE-DE)	17/10/2006

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
General Affairs	2770	2006-12-11
General Affairs	2760	2006-11-13

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	REHN Olli

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
13/11/2006	Debate in Council		Summary
23/11/2006	Vote in committee		
29/11/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
29/11/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0436/2006	
11/12/2006	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
13/12/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0568/2006	Summary
13/12/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
13/12/2006	Debate in Parliament		
13/12/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2006/2252(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/6/41843

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE380.814	10/11/2006	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0436/2006	29/11/2006	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0568/2006	13/12/2006	Summary

Enlargement strategy and main challenges 2006-2007: the institutional aspects of the European Union's capacity to integrate new Member States

2006/2252(INI) - 13/12/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted an own-initiative resolution drafted by Elmar **BROK** (EPP-ED, D) on the Commission's Communication on the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006–2007. It pointed out that the incentive offered by the prospect of EU membership had undeniably contributed to the promotion of reforms, the consolidation of democracy, increased respect for human rights and increasing stability in neighbouring countries. It agreed with the Commission that past enlargements had been a success, strengthening the EU by stimulating its economic growth, reinforcing its role in the world and promoting the development of new EU policies. Enlargement in general was among the most effective instruments of foreign policy and conflict prevention policies of the EU. This success derived from the widespread support for past enlargements as the fulfilment of the initial mission of European integration to reunite the European continent after the political divisions of the twentieth century.

However, lessons could be learned from past experience, notably the need to judge each candidate country on its own merits and to negotiate its accession in accordance with a timetable based on effective compliance with the Copenhagen criteria, as well as the need to avoid setting too early a date for final accession.

Parliament felt that the Union should honour its commitments to the countries which already had membership prospects, provided that those countries complied with the Copenhagen criteria. Any further commitment to enlarge would require far more in-depth scrutiny than ever before of the question of the Union's integration capacity, be it from an institutional, financial or political standpoint. Therefore, Parliament regretted the Commission's failure to provide a sufficiently in-depth analysis of the issues which need to be resolved before the Union can proceed with further enlargements.

The integration capacity of the Union rested fundamentally on three pillars:

1) its institutions and their legitimacy and ability to act and take decisions democratically and efficiently under new circumstances;

2) its financial resources and their overall contribution to economic and social cohesion;

3) the capacity of an enlarged Union to pursue its political objectives. The EU could only expect its citizens to have a positive attitude towards enlargement if they saw a Europe that delivers results, and accordingly, integration capacity could not be seen in isolation from the EU's capacity to act.

Since the Nice Treaty would not provide a basis for further enlargements, Parliament urged Member States to conclude the constitutional process by the end of 2008. The institutional reform of the Union was a need per se, regardless of further enlargements.

Parliament went on to point out that the Commission's Communication did not deal thoroughly with the financial implications of further enlargements and called on the Commission to provide clear and credible estimates of the budgetary implications before any further accession. This debate involved difficult issues which might have implications for the Union's common policies, including its cohesion policies. Furthermore, compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria should be given greater priority than had hitherto been the case in accession negotiations. In previous enlargements progress in the fields of justice, corruption and fundamental rights did not receive enough attention in the early phases of negotiations. Parliament recalled the clear European membership prospects which the Thessaloniki European Council of 19-20 June 2003 offered to the western Balkan countries, and stated that it remained fully committed to these prospects. Current enlargement financial instruments must be strengthened and re-focused so as to target, as a top priority, the fight against corruption and organised crime, with particular emphasis on reforming judiciaries, reinforcing public administrative capacity and improving cross-border cooperation.

With regard to Turkey, Parliament stated that the Turkish refusal to fully comply with the terms of the Additional Protocol was seriously endangering the good progress of the accession negotiations, and it urged Turkey to cooperate in a constructive way to ensure full implementation of the Additional Protocol as soon as possible. However, Parliament deplored the fact that the efforts of the Finnish Presidency to find a solution to the current stalemate regarding the full implementation of the Additional Protocol the one hand and further alleviating the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot Community on the other were not successful.

Parliament's right of assent should apply not just after the conclusion of the negotiation process but also before the opening of membership negotiations.

Reminding Member States' governments and national parliaments that it was their responsibility to inform the public adequately about the benefits of past enlargements and the stakes involved in further enlargements, Parliament felt that they must provide the public with reasons for the decisions they take, unanimously, throughout the accession process.

As part of a reinforced Neighbourhood Strategy, and in addition to the strategies concerning relations with other countries, the Council and Commission should consider an overall EU regional policy in the wider Black Sea area in order to build stronger bilateral or multilateral economic and political relations between the EU and all the countries of this area, particularly with regard to free trade, as is the case for the Central European Free Trade Agreement, investment, energy security and migration policy. This would grant partner countries a stable long-term perspective of institutionalised relations with the EU and provide the incentive necessary to foster the internal reforms required in the countries in question.

While Russia was neither a candidate for EU membership nor part of the European Neighbourhood Policy, relations remained vital in the context of any future EU enlargement strategy. The EU must continue all attempts to develop a unique, wide-ranging partnership with Russia, encompassing trade and energy, but above all human rights and democratisation issues.

Enlargement strategy and main challenges 2006-2007: the institutional aspects of the European Union's capacity to integrate new Member States

2006/2252(INI) - 13/11/2006

Foreign Affairs Ministers took note of the presentation by the Commission of a communication on the European Union's enlargement strategy and main challenges for 2006 and 2007, including a special report on the EU's capacity to integrate new members, as well as progress reports on candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the other Western Balkans. They held an exchange of views.

The Commission's communication (COM(2006)0649) will be used as input for debate on the EU's enlargement strategy at the European Council's meeting on 14 and 15 December, as well as for work on draft European Council conclusions.

A number of delegations highlighted the need for thorough preparation by the permanent representatives committee and the Council ahead of the European Council's meeting.

Enlargement strategy and main challenges 2006-2007: the institutional aspects of the European Union's capacity to integrate new Member States

2006/2252(INI) - 11/12/2006

The Council adopted conclusions on the enlargement of the EU regarding the accession of Bulgaria and Romania on 1 January 2007 and accession negotiations with Croatia and Turkey.

Romania and Bulgaria: it looks forward to welcoming Bulgaria and Romania as Member States on 1 January 2007 and notes with satisfaction that the process of ratification of the Accession Treaty is close to completion. In line with the Council conclusions on Bulgaria and Romania of 16-17 October 2006, the Union institutions will cooperate with both member countries and verify progress in the areas of judicial reform and the fight against corruption and organised crime after accession;

Turkey: the Council takes note of the Commission's report of 8 November 2006 (COM(2006)0649) and welcomes the findings and recommendations contained therein. It welcomes the continued progress made by Turkey in the reform process, but regrets that the pace of reforms has slowed down in 2006. It is essential that Turkey undertakes determined efforts to intensify the reform process and to implement it with determination, so as to ensure its irreversibility and sustainability. The substantial and technical preparation of the negotiations have progressed well. The Council recalls that, in line

with the Negotiating Framework, the advancement of the accession negotiations continues to be guided by Turkey's progress in preparing for accession. In this context the Council notes that further significant efforts are required to strengthen freedom of expression, freedom of religion, women's rights, minority rights, trade union rights and civilian control of the military. In line with the Negotiating Framework, Turkey also needs to commit to good neighbourly relations and to the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the United Nations Charter, including, if necessary, jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. The Council recalls the declaration of the European Community and its Member States of 21 September 2005 and notes that Turkey has not fulfilled its obligation of full non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement. In this context the Council agrees that the Member States within the Intergovernmental Conference will not decide on opening chapters covering policy areas relevant to Turkey's restrictions as regards the Republic of Cyprus until the Commission verifies that Turkey has fulfilled its commitments related to the Additional Protocol.

These chapters are: Chapter 1: free movement of goods, Chapter 3: right of establishment and freedom to provide service, Chapter 9: financial services, Chapter 11: agriculture and rural development, Chapter 13: fisheries, Chapter 14: transport policy, Chapter 29: customs union and Chapter 30: external relations.

The Council will follow up and review progress made on the issues covered by the declaration of 21 September 2005. The Council invites the Commission to report on this in its forthcoming annual reports, in particular in 2007, 2008 and 2009, as appropriate.

Croatia: the Council commends Croatia for the progress it has made in the past year. The accession negotiations have begun well and first results have been obtained. Croatia is now required to build on the progress made. The Council recalls that, in line with the Negotiating Framework, the advancement of the accession negotiations continues to be guided by Croatia's progress in preparing for accession. Particular attention should be paid to accelerating the pace of reforms in the areas of judicial and public administration reform, the fight against corruption, and economic reform. Rigorous implementation of Croatia's obligations under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, in particular in the areas of state aid and real estate acquisition, will be essential to maintain Croatia's positive momentum on the path to EU membership. The Council welcomes Croatia's full cooperation with ICTY and emphasises that Croatia needs to maintain it. Croatia also needs to pay due attention to good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, including making the necessary efforts towards finding solutions to outstanding bilateral issues, in particular border disputes.