Basic information

2010/2995(RSP) RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects	Procedure completed
Resolution on the 2010 progress report on Croatia **Subject** 8.20.01 Candidate countries **Geographical area** Croatia	

Key players

Council of the European Union	**Council configuration**	**Meetings**	**Date**
	General Affairs	3060	2010-12-14
European Commission	**Commission DG**		**Commissioner**
	Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations		FÜLE Štefan

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
09/11/2010	Additional information		Summary
14/12/2010	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
16/02/2011	Decision by Parliament	T7-0059/2011	Summary
16/02/2011	Results of vote in Parliament		
16/02/2011	Debate in Parliament		
16/02/2011	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2010/2995(RSP)
Procedure type	RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects
Procedure subtype	Resolution on statement
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 136-p2
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Motion for a resolution		B7-0094/2011	07/02/2011	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0059/2011	16/02/2011	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2011)3792	22/06/2011	

Resolution on the 2010 progress report on Croatia

2010/2995(RSP) - 16/02/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 548 votes to 43 and 52 abstentions, a resolution tabled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the 2010 progress report on Croatia.

Parliament **commends Croatia for the substantial progress achieved** in attaining the benchmarks necessary for the conclusion of the accession negotiations. It asks Croatia to pursue resolutely the necessary reforms in order to be able to attain the final benchmarks and to conclude the negotiations, welcoming the intention of the Hungarian Presidency to **complete the negotiations in the first half of 2011 if all the criteria and benchmarks are complied with**.

However, Members continue to be concerned that, as revealed by the latest Eurobarometer survey, the majority of Croatian citizens think that Croatia's EU membership would not benefit the country. They encourage the Croatian authorities and civil society, with the help of the Commission, to work to ensure that the Croatians see the European project as being theirs as well.

Political criteria: Parliament welcomes the fact that in June 2010 the Croatian Parliament adopted substantial amendments to the Constitution required by EU accession. It believes that the constitutional changes adopted will pave the way for passing the remaining legislation.

Corruption: whilst welcoming the efforts of the Croatian Government to take a strong stance against all forms of corruption, Parliament notes that corruption seems to have been widespread in Croatia and remains a serious overall problem. It also notes that few corruption cases have come to court and most remain at the prosecution/investigation stage. Parliament calls on the Croatian authorities to further strengthen the administrative capacities of anti-corruption bodies, in particular that of the Office for the Fight against Corruption and Organised Crime (USKOK), and further foster a culture of political accountability.

Judicial system: Members are pleased with the substantial efforts to further reform the judiciary, in particular with the adoption of the revised judicial reform action plan. They stress, however, that the rule of law and citizens' confidence in the judiciary are still suffering from the heavy backlog of cases and excessive length of court procedures. Furthermore, the enforcement of court decisions remains a problem, and the the Commission has not yet observed sufficient progress with regard to the infrastructure and equipment of courts. The Croatian authorities are encouraged to continue improving the independence, efficiency and resources of the judiciary.

ICTY: Members welcome the generally responsive attitude of Croatia's authorities to the Prosecutor's requests for assistance and the fact that requests are answered adequately and access to witnesses and evidence is provided. They call on the Croatian Government, however, to intensify its administrative investigation concerning the military documents requested and clarify inconsistencies in its reports to the Prosecutor's Office that were mentioned in the Prosecutor's latest statement to the UNSC and have not been resolved yet. They also note that further improvements are necessary in the conduct of war crimes trials, in order to ensure fully unbiased, impartial trials as well as to tackle impunity and improve witness protection.

Refugees: Parliament welcomes the overall progress in the field of refugee return and is pleased to note that public hostility towards returning Serbs has diminished in most of the country. It notes, however, that problems still remain for refugees and returnees. It calls on the Croatian authorities to facilitate the reintegration of returnees by further removing obstacles to obtaining permanent residence status, by adequately financing and accelerating the programme of house reconstruction and by launching social and economic recovery projects.

Freedom of expression: the resolution notes that freedom of expression, including freedom and pluralism of the media, is provided for in Croatian law and generally respected in the country. It calls on the Croatian authorities, however, to take further steps to ensure the independence of media outlets and create conditions for their professionalism. It also welcomes the relative progress made in the area of women's rights and gender equality. Parliament welcomes the fact that Croatia was among the first countries to agree to be bound by the International Convention on the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities, as well as welcoming progress with regard to the prison system, and improvements regarding prosecutions for hate crimes. It also notes good progress with regard to respect for and protection of minorities, whilst stressing the need to take the appropriate measures to protect the Roma minority.

Economic criteria: the resolution calls on the Croatian Government (i) to address the structural weaknesses of the economy and reduce its redistributive role through structural reform to boost competitiveness; (ii) to reform Croatia's health sector, social systems and state aid policies; (iii) to address the very low employment rates and pursue further efforts to increase employment by addressing inflexible labour market regulations and the disincentives for workers' participation in the labour market.

Members note that Croatia has continued to improve its ability to take on the **obligations of EU membership**, with a good degree of alignment with the acquis communautaire in most sectors. They encourage the Croatian authorities, however, to devote particular attention to administrative capacities ensuring proper implementation.

Taking note of the tendering procedure for the **shipyards in difficulty** in May 2010, Parliament calls on the Croatian Government to conclude as soon as possible the process of restructuring in this regard in order to attain an important benchmark of the accession negotiations necessary for the provisional closure of the competition chapter. They also urge the Croatian Government to improve the coordination of central government institutions responsible for environmental management, in particular those for spatial planning, waste and water management and air.

Lastly, Parliament encourages Croatia to continue its efforts to **maintain and further develop good-neighbourly relations** and to remain an important and proactive promoter of regional cooperation on all levels. It commends the Croatian President for paying deep respect to Bosnian victims of war crimes on his official visit to Sarajevo in April 2010. It sees this initiative and gesture as a commitment on the part of Croatia to solve historical issues with its neighbours in a fair, sincere and dignified manner.

Resolution on the 2010 progress report on Croatia

2010/2995(RSP) - 14/12/2010

The Council adopted a series of conclusions on the **enlargement strategy**. These may be summarised as follows:

Welcoming the communication from the Commission of 9 November 2010 on the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010-2011, as well as the Opinions on Montenegro and Albania, and the progress reports on Turkey, Croatia, Iceland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the Council states that it broadly shares the Commission’s assessments.

The Council reaffirms the strong support of the EU for taking the enlargement process forward but states that **key challenges remain to be negotiated in most enlargement countries**. Sound macro-economic and fiscal policies and EU-related reforms can help to overcome the economic crisis and to achieve sustainable growth. Strengthening the rule of law, including through judiciary reform and stepping up the fight against corruption and organised crime, remains crucial and requires sustained efforts. Public administration reform is also important for EU policies to function properly. Social and economic inclusion of vulnerable groups, including the Roma, should be improved. Problems affecting freedom of expression and the media remain a particular concern. Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations are essential parts of the enlargement process. They contribute to reconciliation and a climate conducive to addressing open bilateral issues. The Council encourages all parties concerned to address bilateral issues, falling outside areas of EU competence and/or contractual obligations towards the EU, in a constructive spirit and taking into account overall EU interests.

As the countries concerned meet the standards which have been set, including notably those linked to democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms, the EU is committed to working with them to advance to the next steps in the process. The Council welcomes the strengthened link between priorities identified for the (potential) candidate countries and the programming of financial assistance, in particular through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).

As regards Croatia, the Council welcomes Croatia’s good overall progress towards meeting the membership criteria. **Accession negotiations have reached their final stage and preparations for the drafting of the Accession Treaty have progressed steadily. Conclusion of the negotiations is within reach.**

Encouraging progress has been made in many areas, including in the field of rule of law and the fight against high-level corruption. At the same time, further efforts are required, inter alia as regards judicial independence and efficiency, the fight against corruption at all levels, as well as in the fields of public administration reform, the rights of persons belonging to minorities, refugee return and war crimes trials.

The Council encourages Croatia to step up its efforts to fulfil the remaining benchmarks, including the build-up of convincing track records, in particular as regards **competition policy and judiciary and fundamental rights**.

It also welcomes:

- the generally good cooperation of Croatia with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY);
- Croatia’s active role in regional cooperation, the improvement in its relations with neighbouring countries and its efforts aimed at reconciliation in the region. It welcomes the entry into force of the Arbitration Agreement on the border issue with Slovenia on 29 November 2010.

Lastly, building on the results of the Accession Conferences of July and November 2010, the Council hopes that further progress can be registered on this occasion.