Resolution on the White Paper "Preparing the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe for integration into the internal market of the Union"¹, 17 April 1996

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication to the Council entitled 'The Europe Agreements and beyond: a strategy to prepare the countries of Central and Eastern Europe for accession' (COM(94)0320 and COM(94)0361),
- having regard to its resolution of 30 November 1994 on the strategy of the European Union to prepare for the accession of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with a view to the European Council in Essen (9-10 December 1994) [OJ C 363, 19.12.1994, p. 16.],
- having regard to the Commission White Paper on preparation of the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe for integration into the internal market of the Union (COM(95)0163 - C4-0166/95),
- having regard to the accession applications already submitted,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Security and Defence Policy and the opinions of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy, the Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy, the Committee on External Economic Relations, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Citizens' Rights, the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment, the Committee on Regional Policy, the Committee on Transport and Tourism, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media, the Committee on Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs, the Committee on Budgetary Control, the Committee on Institutional Affairs, the Committee on Fisheries, and the Committee on Women's Rights (A4-0101/96),

A. having regard to the fundamental changes in the international political situation since 1989,

B. having regard to the desire of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to accede to the Union and the Union's positive response to it at the Copenhagen European Council, which was endorsed at the Essen, Cannes and Madrid European Councils,

C. having regard to the original objective of European integration of creating the broadest possible federal-style community of democratic states respecting the rule of law and subject to effective democratic control, a force for peace per se,

D. in the expectation that a Europe Agreement will also be concluded with Slovenia in the near future,

E. having regard to the need for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to reform and restructure their economies adjusting them to the rules of the internal market with a view to

¹OJ No. 141, 13/05/1996, p.0135
sustainable development and a social market economy,

F. whereas the Europe Agreements, in conjunction with the associated PHARE development projects, provide an important basis for convergence and harmonization,

G. whereas the institutions of the Union have not yet been adapted to the desired enlargement; whereas conditions must be created to enable the Union to continue to function effectively thereafter,

H. whereas, as the process of integration has shown to date, especially regarding free trade, economic growth, security and the environment, enlargement yields considerable gains for both old and new Member States,

I. whereas enlargement of the Union will have major budgetary and financial consequences, which have not yet been sufficiently evaluated,

J. whereas enlargement of the Union could also have major social, political and security consequences,

K. whereas there must be sufficient support among the citizens of the Union and of the applicant countries,

L. having regard to the evolutive character of the acquis communautaire and the desired Community perspectives,

M. concerned that no suitable security structure has yet been developed with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and that no coherent and democratically legitimized European security policy has yet been established,

N. whereas the propagation of democratic views and the extension of a democratically controlled international legal order provides the best guarantee of security,

O. whereas certain countries which belonged to the former Soviet Union and which are not listed in paragraph 1.15 of the White Paper cannot be envisaged as candidates for membership of the Union but will enter into privileged relationships with the Union through other forms of cooperation, given that they have a vital role to play in consolidating a democratic Europe, economic and social development, stability, and peace,

P. whereas the accession of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will be more complex than earlier enlargements of the Union because of the relatively recent introduction of a free market economy in these countries and because of the more advanced stage of integration of the Union at the time of their accession,

Q. whereas, finally, enlargement will afford an opportunity to foster a more democratic Europe, promote genuine economic and social progress, improve the living standards of all inhabitants, and build a peaceful Europe, united in solidarity, that will be more open to the world and help establish a new world order,
**Principle of accession: procedures and criteria**

1. Believes that enlargement of the European Union to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe presents a momentous opportunity for the European Union to contribute to peace, security and prosperity throughout Europe;

2. Welcomes, therefore, the rapprochement between many democratic States which respect the rule of law in Central and Eastern Europe, on the one hand, and Western Europe on the other, brought about on the basis of various cooperation agreements, and looks forward to the accession of those States as full members of the Union;

3. Points out that from a political point of view the accession of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe has enormous historical importance that cannot be neglected with regard in particular to the peaceful and democratic development of the whole continent and that, therefore, the timetable for accession must depend on political criteria as well as on concrete steps toward harmonization;

4. Notes that the European Council decided in its meeting of 15 and 16 December 1995 that the negotiations with the countries which have requested accession to the Union would start six months after the end of the IGC introducing the institutional reforms required to ensure the success of enlargement;

5. Emphasizes that no decision can be taken on the outcome of these negotiations until the full financial consequences of a future accession are available;

6. Urges the Council and the Member States at the IGC to increase considerably the transparency of decision-making and reform the institutions of the Union so as to enable it to function effectively after its enlargement to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe;

7. Believes that the 1996 IGC is more likely to succeed if the countries with which Europe Agreements have been concluded receive information and are allowed to make comments, albeit while preserving the exclusive decision-making powers of the present members and institutions of the Union;

8. Considers that measures must be taken to ensure that the conclusion of an Association Agreement or Accession Treaty cannot be blocked by a single country and that new Member States cannot veto the accession of subsequent ones;

9. Notes that countries of Central and Eastern Europe upon accession to the Union will have to accept the acquis communautaire in full and cooperate in the institutional development of the Union in the direction of greater democracy and more effective, and hence Community, decision-making procedures, which will involve the transfer of part of national sovereignty to European level;

10. Stresses the importance of beginning consultations simultaneously with all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which have applied for membership of the Union so as to prevent the emergence of a first and second class of applicant countries, even though the membership negotiations with different countries might subsequently last for different lengths of time;
11. Regards the opinions to be published by the Commission after the end of the IGC as a valuable indicator of the efforts made by each candidate country and as the starting-point for the bilateral negotiating process with each of the candidates for accession;

12. Urges the Commission to take account of the state of affairs with regard to the rule of law, democracy and respect for the rights of minorities in the opinions it is to draw up on each of the associated countries;

13. Urges the Council and Commission, in their policy towards Central and Eastern Europe, to take full account of the political activities of other international institutions in this field;

14. Points out that, for these countries, rapprochement with and membership of the European Union present new opportunities and pose a challenge, whilst realizing that major efforts must be made on the part of both the CEECs and the Union in order to make enlargement a reality;

15. Calls on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to persevere in the restructuring and reforms they have embarked upon in their transition to a social market economy and to fully establish and maintain a democratic system at all levels of society, and calls on the institutions of the Union to give active support in this respect;

16. Calls on the European institutions concerned to give the candidate countries the necessary assurances regarding their accession to the Union by drawing up minimum criteria which must be complied with and to adopt the position that the rate of progress towards accession depends on themselves as well as on the reform of the institutions and of the policies of the Union;

17. Points out, however, that a possibly over-hasty accession by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe on purely political grounds - which would inevitably mean that not all conditions with regard to their acceptance of Community legislation were met - would undermine the internal market itself and would result in the Union functioning less efficiently;

18. Points out that the European Council, in its meetings in Copenhagen and Essen, laid down the criteria for the accession of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and also formulated the strategy to prepare them for accession; emphasizes that full implementation of this strategy for accession will strengthen the Union’s internal market;

19. Calls therefore for a phased plan, which takes into account the social dimension, to be drawn up for the gradual integration of the CEEC’s into the internal market;

20. Expects that, in view of the high unemployment in the European Union and in the CEECs, the gradual integration of the CEECs into the EU internal market will be founded on a range of specific variations and applications of the European social model;

21. Notes that a securely established social dimension is the best possible means of averting the above-mentioned undesirable consequences of integration into a single market; calls, therefore, for a social union to be put in place as a central component of the enlarged Union;

22. Draws attention to the importance of assistance in the sphere of social policy and assistance to NGOs working more specifically to strengthen social cohesion and alleviate the distress of the socially most disadvantaged;
23. Regards the White Paper on integration into the internal market as providing significant assistance to the countries concerned, points out the need for a follow-up and calls on the Commission to inform it regularly about the implementation of the White Paper, particularly in the event of general stagnation in a particular country;

24. Urges the Commission to draw up its opinions on the accession of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in order to present them immediately after the end of the Intergovernmental Conference;

25. Welcomes the legislation which has already been approximated in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe but points out that both its implementation and strong administrative and organizational infrastructure are at least as important;

26. Considers that measures to support social administrative and organizational infrastructure in the CEECs is a key task of the European Union with respect to:

- the development of the social dialogue,
- modern social security and health systems,
- labour market agencies,
- bodies representing employees,
- the establishment of vocational training systems,
- the development and implementation of specific programmes to guarantee effective equal opportunities for men and women,
- the collection of accurate statistics and data,
- systems of labour inspections and law enforcement,
- combating discrimination at work,
- combating poverty and social exclusion;

27. Encourages the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to develop intensified forms of cooperation among themselves;

28. Asks for a policy of structured and institutionalized good neighbourliness with all neighbour states remaining outside the present horizon of enlargement of the EU;

29. Stresses the importance of joint parliamentary committees in the framework of the structured dialogue between the European Union and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and wishes to pursue cooperation more actively with the parliaments of those countries through exchanges of key policy documents and commentaries between specialized parliamentary committees;

**Financial and socio-economic aspects**

30. Calls on the Commission to present to Parliament a global analysis of the political and economic benefits of enlargement and, with a view to ensuring an adequate level of economic and social cohesion in the Union, to submit indications at regular intervals on its budgetary consequences, especially its impact on the CAP and the Structural Funds;
31. Instructs its Committee on Budgets in its report on the financial consequences of enlargement to provide a more detailed assessment of all the financial challenges, including the necessary changes in Community policies and the future financial framework of the EU;

32. Acknowledges that protecting the markets of Central and Eastern European countries by means of asymmetrical dismantling of customs tariffs as provided for in the Europe Agreements is defensible with a view to facilitating the viable development of domestic trade, but points out that disguised forms of protectionism on the part of the Union or the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will do nothing to promote either side's confidence in the further positive development of trade relations;

33. Notes the considerable defects in the current EU transit procedure; rejects therefore the extension of the Community Transit Procedure to the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe before (i) the existing EU transit procedure is reformed, (ii) the resources available to all customs administrations to deal with transit are adequate and (iii) the legal powers of customs officials throughout the customs area are sufficient to police it;

34. Asks for the establishment of a comprehensive monetary strategy for the stabilization of CEEC currencies to accompany the preparation and the implementation of the EMU;

35. Hopes that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will be involved in the Union's programmes to combat fraud, in view, inter alia, of the role of the EU budget in development programmes, and stresses the important monitoring role of the Court of Auditors to promote the proper administration of the money of the European citizen;

36. Calls on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to establish in their countries a system for controlling and monitoring the use of funds from the different EU support programmes;

37. Calls on the Commission and Council accordingly to draw conclusions from the recent report of the Court of Auditors and the European Parliament's observations on the unclear organization of aid to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, since this wastes resources and leads to inefficiency, as the recipients have discovered for themselves;

38. Reiterates its belief in the maximum possible level of operational decentralization for the management of PHARE, not only for efficiency reasons, but also as a model for the future administration of Community funds; asks the Commission to include such decentralization among the explicit objectives of the PHARE programme; believes that the successful assumption of responsibility for expenditure by local administrations, subject to all the EU's usual control procedures, should be considered one of the criteria used in assessing a country's readiness for accession;

39. Stresses the importance of the procurement rules applying to the PHARE programme being brought progressively into line with the rules applying to analogous internal EU programmes prior to the accession of PHARE beneficiary countries; accepts, however, the need for a transitional period following accession before fully EU-compatible rules can be enforced;

40. Calls on the Commission to ascertain jointly with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe how the absorption capacity of recipient countries under PHARE can be increased;
41. Calls for a special commitment to tackling the socio-economic position of women in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly as regards equality of opportunity, employment, training and retraining, and social services such as prevention and aftercare establishments in order to guarantee the possibility of combining family responsibilities with an occupation without any discrimination;

42. Calls on the Commission and Member States to take, in close cooperation with the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe, special measures to tackle the exploitation of women in the form of prostitution and trafficking in women from Eastern Europe to the West, with the aim of coordinating existing European policies more effectively;

43. Believes that there is important work for non-profit-making non-governmental organizations and social economy bodies (cooperatives, mutuals, etc.) in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Union to do to rebuild a civil society in these countries, and calls on the Commission to provide active support for democracy through the PHARE programme;

44. Stresses the importance of investing in the development of better social structures in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe; notes, in this context, that privatization in the fields of culture, education, social welfare and health in accordance with the European Union's vision of a social market economy should focus on social organizations (non-profit-making NGOs) rather than the profit-oriented commercial market sector;

45. Stresses the importance of industrial cooperation between the EU Member States and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, without prejudice to the social 'acquis' and ecological guarantees;

46. Welcomes the emphasis on encouraging private investment and hopes that the Union will contribute to the functioning of institutions to promote it;

47. Calls on the Commission, in the run-up to completion of the single energy market, to make the most effective use possible of the outcome of the technical assistance already being undertaken under the PHARE programme, to give effect to the various components of assistance by extending its scope to cover the transfer of information on greater diversification of energy sources (including renewables and energy efficiency), and to devote particular attention to technical assistance in the area of nuclear safety by drawing up measures and programmes to enable unsafe nuclear power-stations to be dismantled and help ensure that the protection and distribution of nuclear power are safe;

48. Is aware of the serious environmental problems inherited by the democratized countries of Central and Eastern Europe; calls in this connection for the necessary financial assistance measures from the Commission and institutional adjustments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe themselves in order to draw the problem continuously to the attention of the authorities and public opinion;

49. Asks the Commission, in this respect, to develop, in cooperation with trade and industry in the Union, a code of conduct for firms based in the EU that invest in these countries so that the same environmental norms and laws that apply in the EU are applied in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe;
50. Stresses the vital role of transport in integration into the internal market and with regard to the free movement of goods and persons and the EU-sustainable transport policy, as formulated in the White Paper on future European transport policy; demands, therefore, investment in trans-European infrastructure policy, mainly in favour of less damaging transport modes (e.g. rail and combined transport), and stresses the need for rapid harmonization of the national legislation of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with EU transport legislation;

51. Attaches great importance to regional and international development programmes which could promote cooperation and mutual understanding among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and between them and their neighbours;

52. Takes the view that rapid approximation of national provisions in the associated States with the principles concerning the agriculture of the European Union set out in the White Paper is an effective means of eliminating the inequality in agricultural trade between the European Union and the candidates for accession and also intensifying trade among the associated States even now; considers it important at the same time that the associated States should make efforts to restore their trade links with the CIS States as far as possible;

53. Believes that in order for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to be successfully integrated into the CAP, both sides will have to carry out the necessary fundamental reforms with a view to the mutual convergence of agricultural policies over an appropriate period; stresses that there must be strong mutual cooperation among the candidate countries at all levels so that reciprocal relations and contacts can be deepened at an early stage to strengthen readiness for membership;

54. Calls on the Union to give a commitment that it will not make use of export subsidies for agricultural products when domestic production in the associated countries is under threat;

As regards education, information and the media

55. Wishes priority to be assigned to training and transfers of know-how to improve the quality of public administration in order to be able to make the necessary changes to laws and regulations; stresses the importance of enhancing the quality of legislation as well as the implementation and enforcement of law in the associated countries and proposes, therefore, that the number of Jean Monnet chairs be greatly increased;

56. Hopes that the Commission will contribute through its communication and information policy in conjunction with local NGOs and the governments of the countries concerned to realistic and responsible opinion-forming among citizens of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and to disseminating an accurate picture, taking into account the different points of view, of the significance of the accession of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, both in the second- and third-pillar fields and as regards Community policy areas;

57. Draws attention to the enormous potential of modern telecommunications technology in a comprehensive communication strategy with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and urges the Commission to cooperate with those countries in its development and ensure that it can promote culture and a responsible approach to information;
58. Emphasizes that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe should not only be given support for their economic development but that assistance should also be given for the provision of education and training facilities and selective aid to local model projects in the field of youth, culture, education and the audio-visual sector;

59. Stresses the importance of exchange programmes for a better mutual understanding of living conditions, elimination of prejudices and as a means of underlining the common European cultural heritage in a world-wide context;

60. Calls on the Commission to act quickly to open up programmes such as Socrates and Leonardo, particularly the facilities for language education, to the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe;

61. Urges the Commission to adopt practical measures such as financial and operational support to free and independent media in order to eliminate material problems faced by the media in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as these problems could promote lasting dependence on government and thus prevent full development of a democratic order;

**As regards the rule of law and internal security**

62. Stresses the decisive role of the protection of human rights in the political and economic partnership with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and points out that it is important to find solutions to problems which arise in protecting the rights of minorities and combating effectively racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance;

63. Believes that socially oriented bodies (non-profit-making NGOs) in Central and Eastern Europe and the Union have a vital part to play in rebuilding civil society in the Central and Eastern European countries and calls on the Commission to provide active support under the PHARE programme for democracy;

64. Observes that developing and maintaining the rule of law is a necessary condition for tackling cross-border crime successfully through European cooperation in the fields of home affairs and justice;

65. Regards a structured dialogue with the Ministers of Home Affairs and Justice as essential and calls for that dialogue to be expanded by involving representatives of the candidates for accession in European cooperation arrangements such as Europol, CIRREFI and the Monitoring Centre for Drugs;

66. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the applicant countries to implement and further develop the measures proposed in the Berlin Declaration on closer cooperation in the fight against drug-related and organized crime, backed up by assistance with basic crime-fighting equipment and adequate training;

67. Urges the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to draw up stringent practical measures to help combat illegal immigration to the countries of the Union;
68. Calls on all associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe to fully respect and comply with the clauses on human rights and the rights of minorities included in the Europe agreements;

69. Calls on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the representatives of the minorities residing within their territory to deal with any conflicts which may exist between them through a permanent and constructive dialogue structure in the spirit of the Stability Pact;

70. Calls for the issue of the Roma and Sinti likewise to be considered during the next round-table talks in connection with the Stability Pact, with a view to finding a structural solution to this problem;

As regards international relations and security

71. Notes the desire of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to be able to opt independently for integration into the security structures of which most EU Member States are already members and would welcome the eventual participation of the applicant countries in the future security arrangements of the European Union, to be discussed in the framework of the IGC;

72. Is of the opinion that further discussion about the integration of the Western European Union and the European Union should take into account the eventual accession of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe; eventual participation of the applicant countries in the future security arrangements of the European Union, to be discussed in the framework of the IGC;

73. Stresses that, in addition to military aspects, security also has, in particular, economic, ecological and social aspects, and that the Commission therefore has instruments at its disposal for making a wide-ranging contribution to peace and security; a central planning and analysis unit would also assist the Commission in the field of preventative diplomacy;

74. Expects the applicants for accession to start making a major contribution to the Union's foreign policy through structured dialogue immediately;

75. Stresses that the accession of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to the Common Foreign and Security Policy will make it all the more urgent to strengthen this policy considerably;

76. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, the parliaments of the Member States and the governments and parliaments of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.