

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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FINAL  
**A5-0090/2003**

25 March 2003

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

on the application by the Republic of Estonia to become a member of the  
European Union  
(AA-AFNS 1-6 – C5-0116/2003 – 2003/0901A(AVC))

Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence  
Policy

Rapporteur: Michael Gahler

### ***Symbols for procedures***

- \* Consultation procedure  
*majority of the votes cast*
- \*\*I Cooperation procedure (first reading)  
*majority of the votes cast*
- \*\*II Cooperation procedure (second reading)  
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position  
majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend  
the common position*
- \*\*\* Assent procedure  
*majority of Parliament's component Members except in cases  
covered by Articles 105, 107, 161 and 300 of the EC Treaty and  
Article 7 of the EU Treaty*
- \*\*\*I Codecision procedure (first reading)  
*majority of the votes cast*
- \*\*\*II Codecision procedure (second reading)  
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position  
majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend  
the common position*
- \*\*\*III Codecision procedure (third reading)  
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the joint text*

(The type of procedure depends on the legal basis proposed by the Commission)

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## PROCEDURAL PAGE

By letter of 20 February 2003 the Council requested Parliament's assent pursuant to Article 49 of the EU Treaty to the application by the Republic of Estonia to become a member of the European Union (AA-AFNS 1-6 – 2003/0901A(AVC)).

At the sitting of 7 April 2003 the President of Parliament will announce that he has referred this application, together with the draft Treaty on Accession of the Republic of Estonia, to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy as the committee responsible and to all committees interested for their opinion (C5-0116/2003).

At its meeting of 21 January 2003 the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy had appointed Michael Gahler rapporteur.

It considered the application for accession, the draft Treaty on Accession, the Commission's opinion and the draft recommendation at its meeting of 17-19 March 2003.

At this meeting it adopted the draft legislative resolution by 56 votes to 2, with no abstentions.

The following were present for the vote: Elmar Brok, chairman; Christos Zacharakis, vice-chairman; Michael Gahler, rapporteur; Alexandros Alavanos (for Sami Naïr), Ole Andreasen, Per-Arne Arvidsson, Alexandros Baltas, André Brie, Véronique De Keyser, Rosa M. Díez González, Hélène Flautre (for Joost Lagendijk), Glyn Ford, Pernille Frahm (for Luigi Vinci), Per Gahrton, Gerardo Galeote Quecedo, Jas Gawronski, Vitaliano Gemelli (for Franco Marini), Alfred Gomolka, Vasco Graça Moura (for José Pacheco Pereira), Klaus Hänsch, Magdalene Hoff, Ulpu Iivari (for Catherine Lalumière), Christoph Werner Konrad (for Karl von Wogau), Efstratios Korakas, Armin Laschet, Nelly Maes (for Reinhold Messner), Cecilia Malmström, Pedro Marset Campos, Hugues Martin, Linda McAvan, Emilio Menéndez del Valle, Philippe Morillon, Pasqualina Napoletano, Raimon Obiols i Germà, Arie M. Oostlander, Doris Pack (for Alain Lamassoure), Hans-Gert Poettering (for Geoffrey Van Orden), Jacques F. Poos, Bernd Posselt (for Amalia Sartori), Luís Queiró, Reinhard Rack (for John Walls Cushnahan pursuant to Rule 153(2)), José Ribeiro e Castro (for Jean-Charles Marchiani pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Lennart Sacrédeus (for David Sumberg), Jannis Sakellariou, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Jacques Santer, Jürgen Schröder, Elisabeth Schroedter, Ioannis Souladakis, Ursula Stenzel, Ilkka Suominen, Hannes Swoboda, Charles Tannock, Gary Titley (for Mário Soares), Joan Vallvé, Bob van den Bos, Paavo Väyrynen, Demetrio Volcic, Jan Marinus Wiersma, Matti Wuori.

The recommendation was tabled on 25 March 2003.

## DRAFT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

### **Legislative resolution on the application by the Republic of Estonia to become a member of the European Union (AA-AFNS 1-6 – C5-0116/2003 – 2003/0901A(AVC))**

#### **(Assent procedure)**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the application by the Republic of Estonia to become a member of the European Union,
  - having regard to the Council's request for Parliament's assent pursuant to Article 49 of the EU Treaty (C5-0116/2003),
  - having regard to the Commission's opinion (COM(2003) 79)<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the draft Treaty on Accession of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Cyprus, the Republic of Latvia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Malta, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Slovenia and the Slovak Republic to the European Union,
  - having regard to Rules 86 and 96(6) of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to its resolution of 9 April 2003 on the conclusions of the negotiations on enlargement in Copenhagen<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to the recommendation of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy (A5-0090/2003),
- A. whereas the conditions for the admission of the applicant countries and the adjustments their accession entails are set out in the draft Treaty on Accession, and whereas Parliament should be consulted on any substantial modifications to this Treaty,
- B. whereas this assent will not determine its position on the adjustment of the financial perspective to cater for enlargement according to Article 25 of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 6 May 1999, and whereas the figures entered in Annex XV of the draft Treaty on Accession constitute the minimum threshold necessary for the adjustment of the financial perspectives,
1. Gives its assent to the application by the Republic of Estonia to become a member of the European Union;
  2. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the Republic of Estonia.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C not yet published.

<sup>2</sup> Vote foreseen in plenary on 9 April 2003 (report by Elmar Brok (A5-0081/2003))

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

### BACKGROUND

Estonia submitted its application for membership of the European Union on 24 November 1995.

Its request is part of the historic process of ending the division of Europe and consolidating the establishment of democracy across the continent. It followed the conclusion of a comprehensive Europe Agreement with the European Communities, intended to help Estonia to achieve its objective to become a member.

In accordance with the provisions of Article 49 of the Treaty, the Commission prepared an opinion on Estonia's request for membership in 1997, applying the criteria established at the Copenhagen European Council of June 1993. The Conclusions of this Council stated that those candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe who wish to do so shall become members of the Union if they meet the following conditions:

- stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- the existence of a functioning market economy, as well as the ability to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union;
- the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

A judgement on these three groups of criteria - political, economic, and the ability to take on the *acquis* - depends also on the capacity of a country's administrative and legal systems to put into effect the principles of democracy and the market economy and to apply and enforce the *acquis* in practice.

The Commission delivered its opinion on the application on 15 July 1997. In accordance with the Luxembourg European Council of 12-13 December 1997, membership negotiations with Estonia, as well as with five other countries, were opened in spring 1998. These negotiations concerned the pace and modalities for Estonia's transposition and effective implementation of the legislation shared by all EU Member States, the *acquis communautaire*.

In parallel, a framework for comprehensive EU support to Estonia's preparations for EU membership was set up and gradually became operational. This includes the Phare, ISPA<sup>1</sup> and SAPARD<sup>2</sup> programmes, from which pre-accession aid is now flowing. The progress in the preparations has been assessed by the Commission in annual reports, the most recent of which was presented on 9 October 2002.

On the basis of that report and the completion of the negotiations in almost all areas, the Brussels European Council of 24-25 October 2002 took decisions in relation to outstanding issues which paved the way for the conclusion of the negotiations at the Copenhagen European Council on 12-13 December 2002.

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<sup>1</sup> Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession

<sup>2</sup> Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development

From the application and onwards, the European Parliament has in a series of resolutions firmly supported Estonia's membership bid and pointed to issues which required special attention. A constructive dialogue with the *Riigikogu* (the Estonian Parliament) has been conducted in the EU-Estonia Joint Parliamentary Committee.

## **GROUNDNS FOR GIVING ASSENT**

Thanks to action by Estonia and arrangements agreed upon in the membership negotiations, in particular transitional arrangements, problems which were earlier significant have been solved or reduced to a size which prevents them from becoming obstacles to Parliament's ability to give its assent. The remaining challenges for Estonia in its EU integration are in most areas not fundamentally different from those of other candidate countries. This applies e.g. to the administrative capacity and the judiciary. It also applies to compliance with the EU *acquis* in areas where this presupposes heavy investments, in particular in relation to the environmental *acquis*. There is reason to believe that Estonia will be able to deal with these challenges successfully. As regards the fight against corruption and fraud - still major problems in most of the candidate countries - the situation in Estonia is much brighter. The Commission progress report 2002 is very clear in stating that 'corruption generally appears to remain a relatively limited problem in Estonia'.

As regards the rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities, a high degree of alignment with international standards has now been achieved. Estonian citizenship has become easier to obtain for non-citizens. Provisions intended to safeguard the position of Estonian as the country's official language have been modified and generally implemented in a well-considered way, limiting the risk of conflict with legitimate minority interests. This largely corresponds to proposals made by the European Parliament and other institutions and relevant organisations.

Healing the last wounds of the russification policy to which Estonia was subjected during the Soviet era and completing the construction of an inclusive and well-integrated society will require a little more time still. It is reasonable to presume that this task will be facilitated by the general confidence which Estonia's fully consolidated independence, its approaching accession to the EU and NATO and the good prospects for a continuation of the strong economic development should inspire.

Finally, the outcome of negotiations on some specific Estonian issues, as already mentioned in the Parliament's opinion, e.g. the oil-shale sector and the milk quota in the agricultural sector, have once more proven the pragmatic but determined approach of the Estonian negotiators throughout the process of getting the *acquis communautaire* and own vital interests in accordance with each other.

These considerations lead your rapporteur to fully recommend that Parliament give its assent to the accession of Estonia, acknowledging all efforts undertaken so far. It is to be hoped that the new government resulting from the Parliamentary election on 2 March 2003 will continue to stay on course and that in the referendum on 14 September 2003, the acceptance of Estonia's accession in public opinion will be clearly demonstrated.