

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1999



2004

Session document

FINAL
A5-0111/2004

25 February 2004

REPORT

on the comprehensive monitoring report of the European Commission on the state of preparedness for EU membership of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia (COM(2003) 675 – C5-0532/2003 – 2003/2201(INI))

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

Rapporteur: Elmar Brok

Co-rapporteurs: Jürgen Schröder, Michael Gahler, Jacques F. Poos, Elisabeth Schroedter, Ioannis Souladakis, Luís Queiró, Ursula Stenzel, Jas Gawronski, Demetrio Volcic, Jan Marinus Wiersma

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PROCEDURAL PAGE

By letter of 5 November 2003 the Commission forwarded to Parliament its Comprehensive monitoring report on the state of preparedness for EU membership of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia (COM(2003) 675), which had been referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy for information.

At the sitting of 28 January 2004 the President of Parliament announced that the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy had been authorised to draw up an own-initiative report on the subject under Rule 47(1), and all the Committees interested had been asked for their opinions.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy had appointed Elmar Brok rapporteur and Jürgen Schröder, Michael Gahler, Jacques F. Poos, Elisabeth Schroedter, Ioannis Souladakis, Luís Queiró, Ursula Stenzel, Jas Gawronski, Demetrio Volcic, and Jan Marinus Wiersma co-rapporteurs at its meeting of 7 October 2003.

The committee considered the draft report at its meetings of 21 January 2004, 18 and 19 February 2004.

At the latter it adopted the motion for a resolution by 30 votes to 0, with 3 abstentions.

The following were present for the vote: Elmar Brok chairman and rapporteur), Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne (1st vice-chairwoman), Geoffrey Van Orden (2nd vice-chairman), Christos Zacharakis (3rd vice-chairman), Ole Andreasen, Per-Arne Arvidsson, Bastiaan Belder, Gérard Caudron (for Sami Naïr), John Walls Cushman, Véronique De Keyser, Gianfranco Dell'Alba (for Francesco Enrico Speroni pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Rosa M. Díez González, Andrew Nicholas Duff (for Bob van den Bos), Hélène Flautre (for Joost Lagendijk), Alfred Gomolka, Giorgos Katiforis (for Alexandros Baltas), Minerva Melpomeni Malliori (for Pasqualina Napoletano pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Cecilia Malmström, Emilio Menéndez del Valle, Raimon Obiols i Germà, Arie M. Oostlander, Jacques F. Poos, Jannis Sakellariou, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Jürgen Schröder, Elisabeth Schroedter, Ioannis Souladakis, The Earl of Stockton (for Jas Gawronski), Charles Tannock, Paavo Väyrynen, Demetrio Volcic, Karl von Wogau, Peder Wachtmeister (for Michael Gahler pursuant to Rule 153(2)) and Jan Marinus Wiersma.

The opinions of the Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs, the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, the Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism and the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities are attached. The Committee on Budgets decided on 20 January 2004, the Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy on 19 December 2003 and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy on 27 November 2003 not to deliver an opinion.

The report was tabled on 25 February 2004.

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

**on the comprehensive monitoring report of the European Commission on the state of preparedness for EU membership of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia
(COM(2003) 675 – C5-0532/2003 – 2003/2201(INI))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the applications by 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 become members of the European Union,
 - having regard to the Comprehensive monitoring report of the European Commission on the state of preparedness for EU membership of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia COM(2003) 675 – C5-0532/2003)¹,
 - having regard to all its previous resolutions and reports since the beginning of the enlargement process and the Commission's regular reports,
 - having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy and the opinions of the Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs, the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, the Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism and the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities (A5-0111/2004),
- A. whereas the progress made by the Central and Eastern European candidate countries during the transformation process needs to be continued in order for these countries to benefit from their accession to the EU,
- B. whereas since 1 May 2003 the representatives of the parliaments of the new Member States have been active observers in the European Parliament,
- C. whereas the new Member States have already participated fully in the Convention and participate in the Intergovernmental Conference,

The ten acceding countries

1. Welcomes the signing of the accession treaty and the impending accession of ten new Member States on 1 May 2004; calls on the parliaments of the current and future Member States concerned to ratify the Accession Treaty as soon as possible;
2. Welcomes the in some cases overwhelming support for accession by the public

¹ Not yet published in OJ.

manifesting itself in the result of the referendums in the new Member States;

3. Emphasises that the endeavour to create a constitutional treaty was and is designed to create a framework which shall ensure efficient functioning of the enlarged Union and eventually contribute to the consolidation of peace and democracy; is concerned about the failure of the Brussels Summit and calls on present and future Member States to clear the way for the adoption of the Constitution on the basis of the Convention text before 1 May 2004;
4. Insists that the Union of Twenty-Five has to try to speak with a common voice in world politics in view of the global challenges;
5. Appeals to the new and old Member States to use the opportunity of enlargement to enhance the feeling of common responsibility in shaping the present and future Union, where the general interest should always prevail over the national interest of a single Member State;
6. Observes that the prospect of accession to the European Union, linked to the necessity of complying with political and economic requirements, has been a powerful driving force for change in all the countries due to accede in May 2004, mobilising political and economic actors to carry out reforms on a scale which remains impressive; appeals to the future Member States not to relax in their efforts to pursue their aim of fully achieving European standards upon accession in the areas considered particularly sensitive (e.g. Roma);
7. Relies on the willingness and capacity of the future Member States to fulfil the commitments undertaken and to remedy the remaining deficiencies identified by the Commission in its monitoring reports; recognises that serious problems have been highlighted by the Commission in only 3% of the legislative process and that in all the other areas the new Member States will have adequately transposed the *acquis* at the day of accession, but that there is still a big gap in its implementation and enforcement in important areas;
8. Is concerned that some of the new countries have had major problems with implementing measures within SAPARD, resulting in delays in paying funds, in some cases not even beginning before 2003 owing to administrative shortcomings; considers that it should be possible, in a transitional phase, to transfer money for rural development not used during the financial year to next year's budget;
9. Hopes that the participation of the new Member States in the common agricultural policy will ensure a positive development for rural areas, which will promote welfare and quality of life; calls on the Commission to take initiatives designed to prevent social disruption in the form of emigration from rural areas and a rise in unemployment; underlines the importance of semi-subsistence farming and stresses the need for support for these farms;
10. Relies on the Commission as the guardian of the Treaties to keep up the pressure on Member States old and new to adapt themselves to the EU legal environment also after accession; underlines that in a European Union based on shared values and the rights set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, respect for freedoms and civil liberties is a

matter of common concern;

11. Calls for the protection of the unique environmental heritage of the candidate countries, through the full and timely implementation of EU environmental legislation and integration of the environment into all EU sectoral policies; reiterates that the use of EU funds for infrastructure development in the candidate countries must be compatible with EU environmental legislation;
12. Stresses the importance of compliance with existing environmental law, especially environmental impact assessment for the proposed trans-European networks for transportation;
13. Shares the Commission's view that implementation of the 'acquis communautaire' in the areas of public procurement, state aid and environmental protection is a basic prerequisite for receiving Structural Fund resources, and points out that the applicant countries concerned must carry out the strategic environmental impact assessment for the programming document and ensure compatibility with Natura 2000;
14. Notes that consumers in current EU Member States are especially concerned about the safety of food from new Member States entering the common market, points to persisting deficiencies in veterinary control in some countries; points to the obligation of the Commission to take measures to stop the sale or export of food products from a certain region or Member State should food safety be endangered;
15. Calls on those Member States introducing transitional arrangements for freedom of movement to closely study real migratory patterns following the enlargement and to abolish these barriers to free movement as soon as possible;
16. Reiterates the possibility of applying existing safeguard measures as well as new clauses contained in the Accession Treaty which are to guarantee the functioning of the internal market and the protection of the citizens of the European Union; underlines that the 'safeguard clauses' should be understood as an instrument to limit possible risk of disruption of the internal market but not as a sign of mistrust vis-à-vis future members; reiterates its demand to be fully associated in the procedure for application of the 'safeguard clauses', which should be applied following a qualified majority decision in the Council and the assent of the European Parliament;
17. Recalls that the smooth application of the EU *acquis* backed up by adequate administrative management and an efficient and independent judiciary are necessary conditions to fully benefit from the advantages of accession to the EU; underlines the importance of good functioning systems to ensure the delivery of EU funds; and warns that some countries have not yet taken all necessary steps;
18. Notes regretfully that major unresolved problems remain; is concerned, in that connection, that the central administration and other parts of the public administration in several countries are still not in a position to ensure due implementation of EU law, including payment of agricultural support; considers that the widespread corruption in the public sector in this context gives cause for particularly serious concern;
19. Is concerned about the little progress made by some accession countries with regard to

veterinary legislation, especially concerning BSE risk prevention and treatment of animal offal; insists that concerning food safety progress is needed urgently; calls upon the Commission to apply the same level of flexibility in old and new Member States with regard to hygiene rules for direct or local marketing and traditional food processing, to distinguish between requirements on hygiene, improving public health and infrastructural demands of industrial food processing, and to take into account local and regional markets, employment and food preferences of producers and consumers in the respective regions;

20. Calls on the new Member States to integrate, to an ever larger extent, civil society into political and socio-economic life, bearing in mind that this is an essential factor for achieving full democratic maturity;
21. Observes that, in parallel to their impressive economic achievements, some new Member States have also experienced a significant increase in unemployment, inequality, and social exclusion; insists that these issues will be further addressed and that the situation should gradually improve through sustained investment in social and economic policies, education and health;
22. Stresses the importance of effective systems for inspecting the actual implementation of the current acquis, especially in the field of the labour market and safety at work; endorses the role of social partners in the creation of effective implementation in this respect;
23. Calls on the new Member States to address the increasing segmentation of their labour market evidenced by the existence of serious skill shortages and mismatches as well as by the growing disparities in the labour market performances of the highly skilled and the low-skilled;
24. Calls for further investment in improving the quality and responsiveness of vocational education and training systems to the needs of companies and individuals; calls for access to lifelong learning opportunities for all to be expanded, in particular by promoting participation in training at the workplace and through targeted intervention aiming to reinforce the employability of those vulnerable groups facing a risk of exclusion from the labour market;
25. Calls on the new Member States to regard the building of Europe-wide infrastructure (transport, energy, etc.) not just as an essential contribution to their own development, but also as a vital means of supporting the cohesion of Europe as a whole;
26. Reaffirms that in new and old Member States additional efforts need to ensure that all individuals will be able to reap the benefits of the different dimensions of EU membership; calls upon the new Member States to address urgently the growing regional disparities on their territories;
27. Encourages the citizens of the new Member States to actively participate in the forthcoming elections to the European Parliament, which will be the first common elections in the history of the newly enlarged Union; calls on the authorities of the new Member States to establish a legal framework which is in conformity with the rules of the European Union and which guarantees all citizens an equal right to participate in

these elections; calls on the institutions of the European Union and the authorities of the new Member States to secure sufficient and relevant information to and communication with citizens in order to improve the democratic legitimacy of the EU; calls on the new Member States should also take this opportunity to relaunch the public debate on the future shape of the enlarged Union and the role of its new members;

28. Supports the governments of all countries concerned in their efforts to continue a long-lasting and intensive policy addressing the problems of minorities (especially the Roma) and aiming at their social integration; calls on the Commission to take more energetic organisational and financial measures to bolster the efforts of the old and new Member States and make integration of the Roma one of the key goals for European policy towards minorities over the next few years;
29. Requests all new Member States to take care that the EU's anti-discrimination *acquis* is fully transposed and implemented in their legislation including full and correct transposition of the provisions for reasonable accommodation for disabled persons as provided for in the Equal Treatment Directive 2000/78/EC; and to make sure that discriminatory legislation, for example against homosexuals, is repealed;
30. Urges the acceding countries, as far as social security is concerned, to continue their efforts, focusing especially on atypical workers and the different forms that discrimination against women and their social exclusion can take as regards migrant women, women belonging to ethnic minorities, women in rural or remote areas, and one-parent families;
31. Supports the new Member States in their fight against corruption and reminds all of them that corruption defrauds societies of the benefits of efficient allocation of often scarce but always limited public resources and affects confidence in the public administration;
32. Calls on the Court of Auditors to focus particular attention on the new Member States in its work concerning the systems for calculating, transferring, and monitoring the three types of own resources under the Community budget;
33. Insists on the need to further improve the security of the external borders of the enlarged Union by combating efficiently illegal trafficking and organised crime and to prepare for the fast realisation of the Schengen standards as a condition for free movement;
34. Stresses the importance of the comprehensive EU Wider Europe – Neighbourhood strategy towards those countries which will remain outside the enlarged Union and counts on the new Member States to actively contribute to building 'bridges' and seeking mutual understanding and cooperation; stresses the importance of the Northern Dimension in the northern regions;
35. Notes that relations between Latvia, Estonia and Russia, in spite of many positive changes, are still marked by tensions and that the border treaty, which is an essential element of normalised relations, has not yet been signed due to the Russian refusal; believes that, as new members of the EU, Latvia and Estonia will engage with Russia in a spirit of mutual understanding and good-neighbourly relations with regard to cross-border cooperation on a wide range of issues including people-to-people contact;

confirms that the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement has to apply without distinction to all Member States, including the new Member States joining the European Union on 1 May 2004, and expects that the required technical adaptations will be applied in time;

36. Recalls that the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) needs to be extended to the ten new Member States; calls on the Commission to pursue negotiations with Russia to this end, and to inform the European Parliament on a regular basis of all developments in this area; expresses its concern about unresolved border problems between some of the candidate countries and Russia which is due to the Russian refusal to sign and ratify the border treaties;

Czech Republic

37. Acknowledges the achievement of the Czech Republic in recent years in remodelling its politics, economy, and society, the end result of which is that the country is now fit to join the Union;
38. Applauds the Czech Republic's good overall economic performance, in particular its real GDP growth of 2% in 2002 and 2.1% in the first half of 2003, as well as the slight drop in unemployment from 8% in 2001 to 7.6% in the first half of 2003;
39. Supports the Government in its efforts to improve the living conditions of the Roma and combat their social marginalisation and discrimination against them in every walk of life; maintains that these efforts will need to continue for many more years; calls on the authorities to make full use of the resources offered by the EU for that purpose;
40. Is concerned about the trafficking in human beings and in particular in children at the Czech-German border ; calls on the Czech Government to support programmes dealing with special assistance to the victims and the creation of protective facilities, and training within the police and border guards to increase awareness of the issue of people-trafficking; calls on the countries concerned to reinforce their cross-border cooperation on the basis of INTERREG so as to promote common prevention programmes as well as further develop social action plans;
41. Calls on the Czech Parliament to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as this is a shared feature of the legal culture of the EU;
42. Welcomes the fact that, by and large, the Czech Republic has progressed with law-making to the point at which it will be able to enforce the *acquis* from the date of accession; calls on the Czech Republic, however, to make the further alignments still needed in some areas, in particular free movement of goods as regards foodstuffs and measures to combat money laundering;
43. Urges the Czech Republic, as regards mutual recognition of professional qualifications in the health care sector and financial control in connection with regional and structural funds, to align its legislation as required without delay; notes with concern that the lack of training, especially of local players, is making itself felt in the Czech Republic in the quality of project development; welcomes the fact that the amended law on public procurement has been adopted;

44. Expresses its disquiet at the Commission's finding that the Czech Republic is not yet in a position to fully transpose the *acquis* in the agricultural sector as regards standards in food-processing establishments; calls on the Czech Republic to remedy the situation immediately so as not to endanger European consumers;
45. Reiterates its demand to be fully informed by the Commission about the implementation of the Melk agreement of 29 November 2001 as regards the Temelin nuclear power plant;
46. Calls on the Czech Republic, in the light of the experience with the floods in summer 2002, to think again about the plans for the barrages on the upper reaches of the Elbe; endorses the Commission's call for this project to undergo an environmental impact assessment and for intermodal alternatives to be worked out;

Estonia

47. Stresses the determination and continuity in efforts made by the Estonian authorities in carrying out the preparations for accession throughout the whole period of transition, which are now nearly completed, to allow Estonia to become a member of the EU as of 1 May 2004; supports the recommendations of the Commission's monitoring report as to the need to remedy urgently the remaining shortcomings, especially in areas such as mutual recognition of professional qualifications, labour law and equal treatment of women and men;
48. Congratulates Estonia on a good result in its referendum for accession to the EU held on 14 September 2003, which shows strong public support in spite of widespread concerns about the possible disadvantages of membership; considers that this endorsement of the EU-oriented policy is essential to pursue further efforts in order to achieve equivalent living standards to those existing in current Member States and extend the benefits of economic development to all sectors of society;
49. Calls on the Estonian authorities to proceed urgently with the transposition of EU legislation in the field of equal treatment of women and men and ensure its effective implementation in order to address this important issue; recalls that gender equality should be regarded as a matter of democratic principle in political, civil and economic life at local, regional and national levels and as part of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is to be respected by all Member States;
50. Congratulates Estonia on a strong economic performance marked by steady high growth rates (6% for GDP in 2002), with a good forecast in the medium term, significant foreign direct investment, and a relatively low inflation rate; considers that the current account deficit is a cause of concern, but is confident that the Estonian authorities will tackle this problem with appropriate measures such as a tighter fiscal policy;
51. Supports the important trans-European infrastructure projects such as Rail Baltica, which would have an important impact on Estonia's further modernisation and would facilitate its integration into the single market; takes note of the Commission's readiness to grant financial and technical assistance to help Estonia in carrying out this project as soon as the necessary conditions are met;
52. Welcomes the measures which have been taken by the Commission, in parallel to the

accession process, in the framework of the Europe Agreement, to liberalise trade in areas as important as agricultural and fishery products, as well as processed agricultural products, with a view to easing Estonia's integration into the single market;

53. Invites the Estonian authorities to enhance the policy framework for regional development and to back these policies with effective instruments at regional levels in order to diminish existing regional disparities (such as the Ida-Viru region); considers that success in this area is essential to preserve socio-economic cohesion and to promote sustainable development;
54. Observes that the governmental programme for integration of minorities in Estonian society is bringing positive results; notes, however, that the number of stateless persons (around 165 000 according to the Estonian Citizenship and Migration Board) is still a matter that requires further efforts and encouragement from the Estonian authorities as well as increased interest and motivation on the part of the stateless persons;
55. Notes that concerning the energy sector, security of supply for oil stocks seems to be guaranteed in compliance with the *acquis*; stresses the efforts made by restructuring the oil shale sector, but notes also in general, with regard to the competitiveness of the energy market, that Estonia needs to undertake further efforts to guarantee the liberalisation of the electricity and gas sectors in accordance with the transitional arrangement to implement the market opening provisions of the Electricity Directive by the end of 2008;
56. Expects Estonia to play an important role in supporting EU policies in the framework of the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood strategy, making the EU benefit from Estonia's understanding and experience in relations with Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus; considers it essential for the political stability of the region to avoid new divisions in Europe after enlargement and to reinforce regional cooperation in a spirit of genuine partnership;

Cyprus

57. Notes that, under the Accession Treaty, signed in Athens on 16 April 2003, Cyprus as a whole will join the Union on 1 May 2004 but the *acquis communautaire* will not be enforced in the northern part of the island until a political solution has been found;
58. Repeats that the Union is seeking to ensure that the whole of Cyprus can accede; notes with satisfaction that the negotiations have been restarted on 10 February in New York under the auspices of the Secretary General of the United Nations and that the latter has fixed for the two sides a strict calendar in order to arrive at a definitive solution before 1 May 2004;59. Reminds that in July 2003 the UN Security Council stated that the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr Denktaş, was to blame for the failure of the negotiations conducted under United Nations auspices; notes that Mr Denktaş's uncompromising attitude is shared by some Turkish circles, whereas others have indicated that they are willing to accept the 'Annan Plan' as a basis for negotiation;
60. Calls on the Greek Cypriots, who are on the verge of accession to the EU, to demonstrate their good faith (in accordance with the requirements of the Balladur initiative, which also apply to the Government of Cyprus), and on the Turkish Cypriot

leader to accept the UN plan submitted by Secretary-General Annan as a basis for negotiations so that, before Cyprus joins the Union, the Cyprus question can be finally resolved and a federal state established in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions, that is to say consisting of two constituent parts and having a single international personality;

61. Notes that Mr Denktaş's attitude is at odds with the views held by the great majority of the original Turkish Cypriot population, which favours accession of a reunited Cyprus to the Union; considers, therefore, that in the election on 14 December 2003 most of the voters supported the opposition parties, even though, because of the electoral system and the speedy granting of citizenship to settlers from Turkey, the victory of the latter does not translate into a majority of seats; calls on Turkey to seize the present opportunity and bring its full weight to bear to enable an agreement to be reached before accession;
62. Expresses its anxiety at the reports that the press is being intimidated in northern Cyprus; calls on the authorities concerned to guarantee the physical safety of journalists and safeguard the principles underlying the right of freedom of expression and the rule of law, especially at election time; commits itself to deepening its own contacts with Turkish Cypriot political parties, civil society and the media;
63. Agrees totally with the Commission's political assessment that a failure to reach agreement on Cyprus could pose a serious obstacle to Turkey's European ambitions; maintains that, although a solution does not constitute a condition for Turkish accession, the Cyprus question thus amounts to a major stumbling block in Turkey's path and a political test of its European resolve; hopes that the Turkish political authorities fully understand its significance; considers it hard to imagine that Turkey could join the Union when it refuses to recognise a Union Member State, has military forces occupying part of that state's territory, is boycotting that state's ships, and is barring that state from its airspace;
64. Notes that the EU is ready, in the event of a settlement of the partition of the island, to promote an international donors' conference, to provide additional support itself of more than €300 million, and to accept Turkish as an official language; hopes that a settlement will be concluded in time for the elections to the European Parliament to be held in the northern part of the island on 10-13 June 2004;
65. Calls on the Commission to step up confidence-building programmes between the two communities so as to pave the way for a lasting peace and a full reconciliation between the parties;
66. Calls on the Government and House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus to address themselves without delay to two problems related to agriculture, namely the future Paying Agency and external trade mechanisms; maintains, as far as the Paying Agency is concerned, that it is entirely in Cyprus's interest to have a system in place to enable it to pay farmers immediately on accession;
67. Calls on Cyprus to continue its efforts in the transport sector regarding maritime safety surveillance;

68. Notes with satisfaction, in addition, that the Commission states that ‘Cyprus has reached a high level of alignment with the *acquis* in most policy areas’; urges the authorities concerned to avoid slackening their efforts to prepare for accession;

Latvia

69. Welcomes the current reforms undertaken by the Latvian authorities aiming at restructuring and reinforcing administrative capacity, which should improve coordination, transparency and accountability of administrative actions; considers, however, that it is of the utmost importance to further strengthen the public administration, notably by ensuring a new salary system with a view to providing competitive remuneration in the public sector; draws attention also to the necessity of speeding up the implementation of the administrative territorial reform started in 1998;
70. Is concerned about the persistent high level of corruption, which continues to tarnish the country’s international image and trust at home; therefore fully supports the strong commitments by the current Government to increase the effectiveness of the anti-corruption measures, including in the field of public procurement, through a new strategy prepared by the newly established Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (CPCB) in cooperation with governmental institutions and NGOs; considers the work of the CPCB as a positive step forward and in particular its first investigations into high-level corruption cases including violations of the law on political party financing; is, however, concerned about the lack of democratic control of this office, which is under the control of the Prime Minister; considers that to be effective, the fight against corruption must be accompanied by efforts to build up a good civil service culture so that respect for law and regulations is supported by individuals applying ethical standards of behaviour in daily practice;
71. Welcomes the reform of the judicial administration to clarify legal competencies as well as simplifying judicial procedures; stresses in particular the substantial improvement of prison conditions for convicted minors; refers to the qualification requirements, the remuneration system and the social guarantees of judges, which constitute a positive move in the right direction; considers of the utmost importance the improvement of citizens’ access to legal aid as well as the promotion of it; is concerned about extended pretrial investigations, overcrowded prisons and the low prioritisation given to investigating human trafficking; welcomes, therefore, the elaboration of the National Strategy for the Combating of Human Trafficking completed by 1 November 2003 and invites the Cabinet of Ministers to adopt it without further delay;
72. Is concerned about the situation of people in Latvia suffering from poverty and social exclusion who, despite being long-time inhabitants of the country, have no clear status due to changes in citizenship legislation and are held without any access to free legal aid in the prison-like Olaine detention centre; consequently urges the Latvian authorities to immediately grant these people a status of residence and make efforts to integrate them into Latvian society; calls for the Latvian authorities to take humane decisions in the area of asylum and migration policy based on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;
73. Recognises that citizenship, language and education policies in their legal framework have been brought into line with international standards; calls, however, on the Latvian

authorities to ensure bilingual education during school age, including the final exams, according to the current rules, which envisage 60% of teaching in the state language and 40% in the minority language, and stresses the necessity of maintaining adequate scope for minority language teaching; considers that flexible application of the education law could contribute to social and economic integration of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvian society and promote dialogue so as to soften tensions with this minority, which represents a significant part of the population;

74. Welcomes the increase in the naturalisation rate in 2003 mainly due to the referendum campaign for the EU accession, even if the naturalisation process of the non-citizen part of society remains too slow; therefore invites the Latvian authorities to promote the naturalisation process and considers that minimum language requirements for elderly people may contribute to it; encourages the Latvian authorities to overcome the existing split in society and to favour the genuine integration of 'non-citizens' ensuring an equal competitive chance in education and labour; proposes that the Latvian authorities envisage the possibility of allowing non-citizens who are long-time inhabitants to take part in local self-government elections; welcomes the continuing dialogue between representatives of government and civil society regarding the ratification of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as well as the establishment of a specific subcommission on society integration in the Saeima's Human Rights Commission; recommends the Latvian authorities to ratify quickly this Framework Convention;
75. Recognises the substantial efforts made by the Ministry of Agriculture to close the remaining gaps by the time of accession; calls, however, on the Latvian authorities to make sure that all necessary measures will be taken to finalise national procedures to ensure full operation of a Paying Agency, which will carry out EU-financed rural development projects;
76. Invites the Latvian authorities to further improve the policy framework for regional development and back these policies with effective instruments at central and regional levels, bearing in mind that success in this area is crucial for socio-economic cohesion and sustainable development; considers it important to take seriously into account the preparations for managing the European Social Fund as well as all Structural Funds; considers that before these policies bring results and funds are channelled, it would be suitable to create alternative employment opportunities in the less developed agricultural and former industrial regions and to use redistributive mechanisms to avoid growing income inequalities; stresses the need to continue the organisation of training related to local and regional social and environmental partners to strengthen their ability to participate in the monitoring committee for the implementation of the Structural Funds;
77. Takes note that especially in rural areas the unemployment rate remains at a very high level and deplores that the statistics from the European Commission which were brought forward by Latvia for Objective 1 count Latvia as a whole and did not reflect the serious regional disparity of unemployment; being aware that the main problem in the regions is the lack of working opportunity, therefore invites the Commission to pay particular attention to the most disadvantaged regions such as Latgale and encourage the Latvian Government to concentrate on measures to tackle unemployment, social

exclusion, poverty and inequality in the framework of the single programming document through Structural Funds; considers that investment in welfare projects is necessary to preserve socio-economic cohesion and enable the poorest sectors of Latvian society to benefit from economic development;

78. Asks Latvia to do more to integrate ethnic minorities; regrets the shortcomings in the autonomous bilateral social dialogue between employer and employee representatives and the lack of collective agreements; urges Latvia to transpose the working time regulations in some sectors;
79. Insists that the *acquis* for food hygiene standards serves solely to protect consumers and to ensure that foodstuffs are of good quality; it should not bring about either a deliberate structural concentration in the food-processing industry which might provoke additional unemployment in rural regions; encourages the Latvian Government to make use of the rural development programmes to diversify production and to support decentralised high quality food production;
80. Welcomes the Commission's decision to include the infrastructure projects, such as Rail Baltica, in the 'priority list', which would help Latvia's further modernisation;
81. Points out that freedom of expression for all citizens and for Members of Parliament in particular must be guaranteed entirely beyond suspicion, in every candidate country, and that Members of Parliament must invariably be protected from any form of retaliation on account of views expressed in the performance of their duties; stresses its disquiet, therefore, at the recent attempt by the Latvian Parliament to remove one of its members from office as an observer in the EP.

Lithuania

82. Welcomes the overwhelming public support in the referendum for accession (91% in favour with a turn-out of 64%), which confirms the attractiveness of the European project for Lithuanian society and shows its willingness to contribute to its further development;
83. Recognises with satisfaction the enormous progress made by Lithuania during the last three years in the economic field; starting from being one of the slowest developing among the candidate countries, Lithuania grew into one of the most dynamic European economies with a very high rate of growth (9.4% of GDP in the first quarter of 2003), a low inflation rate and a substantial volume of foreign direct investment;
84. Notes that according to the monitoring report Lithuania has reached a high level of alignment with the *acquis* in most policy areas and managed, to a large extent, to fulfil its commitments, which places it in the lead among the ten acceding countries; is confident that it will meet the EU requirements in the remaining areas before the date of accession; recalls, therefore, that special and urgent attention should be paid to the unresolved problems identified in the monitoring report (*inter alia* in the area of fisheries, as regards inspection and control in relation to resource and fleet management and to problems of mutual recognition of qualifications);
85. Considers that the fight against corruption should continue to receive high priority;

recognises that the legal framework and institutional setting are being strengthened but additional efforts are required to tackle corruption in a systematic and effective way ensuring adequate prevention and expanding the sense of civic responsibility among economic and political actors;

86. Encourages the Lithuanian authorities to further address the problem of high and persistent unemployment by implementing active labour market policies and to pursue pension and health reforms and try to remedy the social security deficit, bearing in mind that these areas are particularly important to the well-being of Lithuanian citizens;
87. Takes note of the satisfactory level of integration of minorities in Lithuania, which is an important factor for social cohesion and political stability;
88. Stresses the importance of adequate preparations for the effective use of structural funds, which would give an additional boost to Lithuanian economic growth, would help to create new jobs and would benefit business as well as individuals (education, professional training, etc.); welcomes the advanced state of preparation of the single programming document, which should help to avoid a build-up of delays in implementing the Structural Funds in the first year after accession;
89. Welcomes the good-neighbourly relations with Russia and the ratification of the 1997 border agreement between Russia and Lithuania as well as the recently concluded readmission agreement; notes the effective functioning of the transit of people across Lithuania's territory to and from Kaliningrad;
90. Stresses the importance of ensuring security on the Lithuanian borders which will become the external border of the enlarged EU; calls on the Lithuanian authorities to pursue their struggle with illegal trafficking and organised crime, adopting energetic measures to investigate crimes and punish offenders; calls for special attention to be paid to the Kaliningrad-Lithuania border line, where the situation is particularly fragile, as proved by the recent case of corruption implicating some high-ranking customs and border officials;
91. Is aware of the Lithuanian concern about the exploitation of oil by the Russian Company Lukoil in the Baltic Sea (Kravcovskoye deposit) situated 22 kilometres from the Curonian Spit included in the UNESCO World Heritage list; calls, therefore, on the parties concerned for a joint effort to ensure the safety of operations and minimise the risk of pollution in this particularly vulnerable area;
92. Supports the important infrastructure projects, Rail Baltica and the Lithuania-Poland power grid, which could have an important impact on Lithuania's further modernisation and would ease the integration of Lithuania within the European energy system; welcomes the Commission's decision to include them in the 'priority list' and calls on the Commission for technical and financial assistance to help Lithuania to carry out these projects provided that all previous necessary conditions are met;
93. Takes note of recent progress made by Lithuania in various fields of nuclear safety, including *inter alia* its preparation for the closure and decommissioning of the Ignalina NPP, safety improvements, and the new law on social guarantees; recalls Lithuania's commitment, at the EU's request, to closing unit 1 of the Ignalina power plant before

2005 and unit 2 by 2009 with financial help from the EU; in this regard expects the Commission to fulfil its commitment to Lithuania in the most satisfactory manner for both parties concerned;

94. Welcomes Lithuania's active and positive role in enhancing cooperation with the Eastern European-neighbours of the enlarged Union and thus supporting the EU Wider Europe neighbourhood policy, which is of particular importance for preserving existing economic and cultural links among neighbouring countries and ensuring the stability of the whole region; takes note of various initiatives of the Lithuanian authorities in the framework of regional cooperation and Lithuania's readiness to cooperate closely with southern Caucasus countries by sharing experience and achievement in economic, political and security areas;

Hungary

95. Welcomes the fact that efforts have continued and the preparations for accession have maintained their momentum; notes the determination of the Hungarian authorities to fulfil all their commitments in time; endorses the conclusions of the Commission's monitoring report, which has identified the problems still to be resolved by 1 May 2004; draws attention in particular to the urgent need to remedy the shortcomings in the agricultural sector by setting up a Paying Agency and the Integrated Administration and Control System, providing for measures to promote rural development, and bringing agri-food establishments into line with the required plant health standards;
96. Notes that the performance of the Hungarian economy, which has been one of the most buoyant in the region throughout the transitional period, has slightly declined over the past year (the growth rate was approximately 2.9% in the third quarter of 2003 compared with 3.3% in 2002) and the fiscal and trade deficits must be tackled; notes with satisfaction that the draft budget entails tighter budgetary management combined with substantial cuts in administrative expenditure (to slim down public services) and new tax measures;
97. Points to the steps taken by the Hungarian authorities to strengthen judicial capacity and calls on them to provide the necessary financial resources and establish procedures for selecting judges in accordance with clear-cut standardised criteria making for the utmost transparency, as is essential in order to foster a professional judiciary; welcomes the fact that a law was adopted on 20 October 2003 to improve judicial assistance;
98. Notes that the 'Status Law', on the advantages to be accorded to citizens of Hungarian extraction in neighbouring countries, was amended in June 2003 in such a way as to tone down the initial provisions, which Romania and Slovakia regarded as discriminatory, contentious and unacceptable, especially where the extraterritorial effects of the law were concerned; welcomes the agreement already reached and urges the parties concerned to intensify their dialogue in order to resolve all outstanding issues and enable Hungary and its neighbours to sign a comprehensive agreement at an early date; calls on the Hungarian authorities to ensure that the secondary legislation is properly enforced; points to the importance of preserving and consolidating good-neighbourly relations with Hungary's neighbours, since this is a key factor for regional stability;

99. Notes that an ‘anti-discrimination’ law has been adopted and a minister appointed to deal with the matter; believes that, if they are to be effective, measures to combat discrimination, intolerance, and exclusion (especially where the Roma minority is concerned) must go hand in hand with the method already proposed by the European Parliament whereby, under broader social and development policies, the people concerned would be given the opportunity to become increasingly more involved in planning, implementing, and assessing projects and specific measures to promote their integration;
100. Notes that the reform of health care has continued and a new law was thus adopted on 16 June 2003 to open the way to large-scale privatisation of health care facilities, including hospitals; hopes that the new legislation will be implemented in such a way as to reconcile greater efficiency and better management of health services with the legitimate expectations of citizens as regards access to a decent standard of care; notes that many measures have since been taken to develop home care and outpatient treatment and to promote private health insurance and nursing schemes;
101. Draws attention to Hungary’s advocacy of a stronger CFSP; trusts that Hungary will play an active part in developing the policy; believes that Hungary’s experience in relations with the Balkan countries will be particularly useful from the point of view of forging ties between that region and the Union;
102. Notes that the legal framework for fighting organised and economic crime has been improved, breakthroughs have been achieved in combating money laundering, and an anti-corruption programme and a whole series of measures (including the ‘glass pocket’ programme adopted in April 2003) have been implemented to bring greater transparency and control to bear in the management of public money; points, however, to the seriousness of corruption leading to misappropriation of public funds and hopes that the proper authorities will take every step required to investigate and shed light on this matter;
103. Calls on Hungarian citizens to participate actively in the European Parliament elections, in which Hungary will be electing its representatives for the first time; urges the Hungarian authorities to build on the very positive contribution that Hungary and its representatives have made to the constitutional process in the Convention and the debate on the future of Europe to engage citizens in the European political process;

Malta

104. Welcomes the fact that, following the clear result of the referendum and the general election, all parties now unreservedly support Malta’s membership of the Union; expects that Malta, politically united on that basis, will be able to make a success of integration into the Union for the good of all concerned;
105. Welcomes the fact that the Maltese Government has managed, under difficult political conditions, to align Maltese legislation with the Union *acquis* in virtually all legislative areas;
106. Encourages Malta to keep up the efforts so that it is fully prepared to take up the obligations of membership upon accession;

107. Notes that Malta has completed most preparations in the area of mutual recognition of professional qualifications;
108. Welcomes the fact that, as regards state aid, Malta has largely fulfilled the Treaty obligations incumbent on it and supports the efforts of the Government to take rapid steps to restructure shipyards so as to enable the remaining commitments to be met upon accession;
109. Supports the Maltese Government in its efforts to fulfil the Treaty requirements in agricultural policies and in particular in the area of public health in the food processing industry, of the Paying Agency and the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS);
110. Welcomes the fact that Malta has met virtually all of the Treaty requirements regarding environmental protection and looks to it to continue the reforms in the areas of waste management, nature conservation and water and air quality;
111. Assumes that after accession, and notwithstanding certain transitional arrangements, the provisions of the European Wild Birds Directive in particular will be fully transposed and implemented in keeping with European species conservation;
112. Reiterates its recommendation that Malta should be accorded six seats in the European Parliament, which would be in proportion to the population of the country;

Poland

113. Notes the desire and determination of the Polish Government to make every effort required to remedy the shortcomings identified in the comprehensive monitoring report so as to fulfil the commitments entered into during the negotiations and enable Poland to be ready for accession on 1 May 2004; notes that in areas in which Poland is lagging behind (the audio-visual sector and public procurement, for example), the time lost can quickly be made up, given the progress achieved since the Commission report was completed;
114. Considers it essential for the reorganisation and modernisation process to continue; recognises, however, that political decision-takers have difficult choices to make because they have to reconcile the demands of workers in danger of losing their jobs on account of restructuring and company closures with the economic viability of sectors as sensitive as steel-making or the mining industry;
115. Hopes that greater security will also be provided for foreign investors;
116. Calls on the Polish authorities to act quickly to transpose as soon as possible the remainder of the *acquis* relating to mutual recognition of professional qualifications, so as to align legislation in the area of free movement of persons, as is necessary in order to enable members of the professions concerned to take up job opportunities on the European market;
117. Notes the far-reaching reform of public finances, which was necessary in order to reduce the deficit and stabilise the budgetary system by rationalising public spending and preparing public finances for accession; recognises the increased effort by

particularly vulnerable strata of Polish society, which have to suffer the immediate consequences of the reform for welfare benefits (retirement and other pensions, and allowances);

118. Notes with satisfaction that macroeconomic indicators improved markedly in the second half of 2003 compared with the two preceding years, the rise in the growth rate amounting to 3.8% of GNP, as a result of an upsurge in exports and domestic demand, which rallied to some extent; hopes that this recovery, once consolidated, will help to reduce unemployment, which remains worrying, and calls for sustained joint efforts by the Government, regional and local authorities, and economic and social players as a whole; notes with concern that especially in the poorer parts of Poland, there are not enough co-financing resources available at local level to enable sustainable development concepts to be implemented as actively as is needed;
119. Expresses its anxiety at the delays in setting up paying agencies and the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS), which have to be properly in operation to enable direct payments to be made to farmers; notes, given the complexity of the procedures, that the Commission needs to provide greater technical assistance, to be combined with the efforts of the Polish authorities, which in accordance with the government decision of 6 November 2003, will be significantly raising the number and skill levels of personnel working in this sector; insists that information policy and the involvement of civil society in rural development measures need to be substantially improved in order to stabilise the rural economy and to avoid further massive unemployment in rural regions; urges the Polish Government to fully implement the agro-environmental measures and to support the LEADER-type local action groups in their integrative rural development efforts;
120. Welcomes the measures taken by Poland to increase security at its eastern border by raising staffing levels, improving management and surveillance resources as well as meeting the visa requirement as regards its eastern neighbours on 1 July 2003 in a way which allows a simple procedure for inhabitants of the border regions; considers that it would be desirable, in this connection, for Poland to take diplomatic initiatives aimed at preserving good-neighbourly relations and economic and cultural ties with its eastern neighbours; therefore stresses the necessity of setting up a cross-border programme in the framework of the reform of TACIS and within the neighbourhood instruments; draws attention also to the necessity of decentralising the INTERREG programme towards cross-border regions;
121. Welcomes the agreement between the Polish and Ukrainian governments to support the project to extend the Odessa to Brody pipeline as far as Poland;
122. Notes with anxiety that corruption is continuing to damage the various spheres of economic and political activity, at both national and local level, undermining the prestige of the political community, and leading to considerable social malaise; believes that measures to combat corruption, which the Polish Government has included among its priorities, must be pursued resolutely and in accordance with the law, using the appropriate resources;
123. Considers that the effectiveness of judicial machinery needs to be improved; welcomes the fact, therefore, that laws have been adopted to amend the codes of criminal and civil

procedure (and entered into force on 1 July 2003 and 14 August 2003 respectively) on the one hand with a view to simplifying and accelerating procedures, which should help to clear the backlog of cases, and, secondly, to enable judgments to be satisfactorily enforced; points to the need to improve judicial assistance to citizens;

124. Repeats its recommendation that an effective professional civil service be set up to help citizens and that it must be capable of undertaking the tasks falling to modern public administration and providing proper interministerial coordination; notes that the number of officials recruited by competitive examination is still very limited (about 1% of employees as a whole) and that the Civil Service Act, adopted in 1999 in accordance with European Union standards, is not being enforced satisfactorily; urges the Polish authorities to adopt horizontal legislation to harmonise every aspect of the operation of the civil service;
125. Notes the plan to reform the health care system, the operation of which has, in recent years, been sharply criticised and caused disquiet within Polish society; hopes that the new reform will serve to reconcile the standard of health care needed in the interest of patients with the requirements of sound economic management;
126. Welcomes the initiative of a draft law on reproductive rights; stresses also the significance of the newly proposed provisions on registered partnerships as a step forward against discrimination because of sexual orientation;
127. Notes the draft electoral law for European Parliament elections, which is due to be endorsed by the President in early February 2004; considers, however, that the necessity of collecting 10 000 signatures in one region is an obstacle to greater diversity of electoral lists and does not strengthen willingness to participate in the elections; urges the authorities and non-governmental organisations to relaunch the campaign to inform and galvanise Polish voters in order to prepare in the best possible way for a historic occasion, the first election following Poland's accession to the Union;

Slovenia

128. Welcomes Slovenia's significant economic progress, in particular the real GDP growth of 3.2% in 2002 and 2.6% in 2003; expresses concern at the rise in the unemployment rate from 6% in 2002 to 6.8 % in 2003; notes that the market economy is functioning and that Slovenia has lifted the restrictions on direct foreign investment; believes that, to achieve economic competitiveness, the Government should implement certain structural reforms by privatising the financial sector, including the insurance institutions; notes that, according to the information compiled by the Commission, Slovenia is the country, among the ten candidates, which records the fewest shortcomings;
129. Welcomes the fact that Slovenia has adjusted virtually all of its legislation so that it will comply with the Union *acquis* from the date of accession; points out to Slovenia that if it is to benefit to the full from European structural and regional funds, it will need to ensure compliance with European rules on procurement; notes, however, regarding the chapter on free movement of persons, that mutual recognition of professional qualifications must be speeded up, regarding some specific sectors; welcomes the fact that the laws in the health care sector implementing the Community legislation on

mutual recognition of professional qualifications were recently adopted;

130. Notes that in the debate on constitutional changes, the Slovene Parliament is discussing the adjustments to be made in some areas still to be aligned and that the subjects under discussion also include pensions, equal opportunities, territorial division, and certain additional measures in the judicial sphere;
131. Notes that the law on the operation of public administration entered into force a few months ago and it is too early to ascertain the benefits; welcomes the fact that the law is intended to reduce the number of political appointments and a 12-member Civil Service Council is ensuring that senior officials are selected on a politically impartial basis; supports Slovenia in its efforts to strengthen the capacity of the judicial system, not least with a view to eliminating the backlog of cases in many courts;
132. Notes that, according to official studies, the average citizen is not involved in corrupt practice but the phenomenon is more prevalent at high levels; points out that privatisation has raised a number of thorny issues and that Slovenia is closer to the sociological profile of developed countries than to the very widespread corruption in transition countries;
133. Notes that inflation remains one of the concerns for the Government but that the rate was reduced from 7.2% in 2002 to 5.6% in 2003; welcomes the fact that the Government has set itself the goal of bringing the figure down to match the euro area eligibility requirement; notes that, to bring Slovenia into line with the Union Member States, its economy has to be made more competitive, which can be achieved only by relaunching privatisation and giving full effect to the reforms laid down by the European *acquis*;
134. Calls for further efforts to bring about the law on rail transport, including trans-European networks; calls also, as regards the common foreign and security policy and the existing arrangements, for Slovenia to take part in the dialogue and move into line with the declarations issued and the sanctions and restrictive measures imposed by the Union;
135. Notes that one of the main questions in the relationship with Croatia is that Croatia has unilaterally declared an ecologic zone in the Adriatic sea, which runs counter to the position of the European Commission; considers it a necessity to reach first an agreement on all questions with all interested countries before such a zone can be declared; notes that it is in the interest of all parties to find a mutually acceptable solution;

Slovakia

136. Welcomes the continuing reform of the judicial sector and supports its main aims, namely reducing the heavy workload of judges by recruiting higher court officials, applying case management systems, reinforcing training and combating corruption in the judiciary; recognises the first positive results of this long-term reform; supports the view that the effective implementation of the legal and administrative framework of the EU will continue to require further efforts over several years;

137. Calls on the Commission to ascertain to what extent the Slovak law on the registration of religious communities is contrary to international conventions on fundamental freedoms;
138. Refers to the latest reports of Transparency International and calls on the Government to continue the fight against corruption as one of its priorities; welcomes that recently introduced legislation has led to a number of high-profile cases, which should facilitate further efforts in the fight against corruption; looks forward to the speedy adoption of the laws on illegally acquired property and on conflicts of interest, both currently being drawn up in Parliament;
139. Supports the Government in its efforts to improve the living conditions of the Roma and to fight against their social exclusion as regards education, employment, access to public services and discrimination in general; notes that all levels of the administration need to make efforts to implement strategies and action plans; emphasises that such efforts need to be continued for several years to come; calls on the administration to endeavour to utilise all means put forward by the EU to the full; urges the Government to strengthen the implementation of the plans put forward to the European Parliament; supports the recommendation of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe concerning certain aspects of law and practice relating to sterilisation of women in the Slovak Republic; welcomes the proposed changes to the legislation concerning sterilisation;
140. Welcomes the constructive cooperation between the political representatives of the Hungarian minority and their partners in the ruling coalition, which has improved the situation for the Hungarian minority, as can be seen from the fact that, for example, the minority's demand for its own university has been met, the Hungarian-language János Selye University having been founded in the town of Komárno;
141. Welcomes the steadily improving macroeconomic performance of Slovakia, in particular the real GDP growth of 4.4% in 2002 and still 3.9% in the first three quarters of 2003 and the slight fall in unemployment from 18.6% in 2002 to 17.5% in the first three quarters of 2003; is adamant that economic growth needs to benefit the whole of the population and calls on the Slovak Government to continue the fight against unemployment and its efforts to reduce regional disparities; asks the Government to take care that it is not the most vulnerable in society who carry the burden of reform;
142. Welcomes the continuing reform of public administration in Slovakia and asks the Government to implement this as quickly as possible;
143. Welcomes the fact that Slovakia largely has all legislation in place to implement the EU *acquis* from the date of accession; is, however, concerned about the four problematic areas highlighted by the Commission and urges the Government to address these before 1 May 2004;
144. Calls on Slovakia to make sure that it fulfils the conditions which it accepted in the accession negotiations in order to benefit from a transitional period during which fiscal aid can be granted to one particular company in the steel sector until 2009 at the latest; notes that the condition attached concerns production limitations and reminds the

Slovak Government that the steel sector is a particularly sensitive sector for producers in other countries;

145. Welcomes the fact that the legal basis for the Paying Agency for agricultural funds has been adopted and calls on Slovakia to have the agency operational and fully functioning as soon as possible; considers that in particular a failure to have the agency up and running at the time of accession could greatly harm Slovak farmers; asks Slovakia to implement the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS) and to improve public health protection in agri-food establishments, which is – as in other new Member States – a serious concern for the EU;
146. Reminds Slovakia that there are still some problems in the area of actions under the Structural and Cohesion Funds, in particular in the area of task allocation and coordination of institutional structures at central and regional levels and in the area of financial management and control; failure to reach the necessary standards would force the Commission to retain funds destined for Slovakia;
147. Welcomes the measures adopted by the Slovak government to improve the protection of the country's eastern borders and calls on further increasing safety on the Slovak-Ukrainian border as a key to the successful integration of Slovakia into the Schengen Treaty;
148. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the future new Member States.

10 February 2004

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON CITIZENS' FREEDOMS AND RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

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

on the comprehensive monitoring report of the European Commission on the state of preparedness for EU membership of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia
(COM(2003) 675 – C5 – 0532/2003 – 2201/2003(INI))

Draftswoman: Baroness Ludford

PROCEDURE

The Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs appointed Baroness Ludford draftswoman at its meeting of 21 January 2004.

It considered the draft opinion at its meeting of 9 February 2004.

At the latter meeting it adopted the following suggestions unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Jorge Salvador Hernández Mollar (chairman), Robert J.E. Evans (vice-chairman), Johanna L.A. Boogerd-Quaak (vice-chairwoman), Baroness Ludford (Draftswoman), Roberta Angelilli, Carmen Cerdeira Morterero, Carlos Coelho, Gérard M.J. Deprez, Giuseppe Di Lello Finuoli, Timothy Kirkhope, Ole Krarup, Lucio Manisco (for Ilka Schröder), Bill Newton Dunn, Arie M. Oostlander (for Eva Klamt), Marcelino Oreja Arburúa, Elena Ornella Paciotti, Hubert Pirker, Bernd Posselt, José Ribeiro e Castro, Martine Roure, Ole Sørensen (for Francesco Rutelli), Patsy Sørensen, Joke Swiebel, Anna Terrón i Cusí, Maurizio Turco and Christian Ulrik von Boetticher.

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

- having regard to successive European Parliament reports on fundamental rights in the European Union and on progress in establishing the area of freedom, security and justice, to the report[s] of the EU network of fundamental rights experts and to the Commission communication on Article 7 TEU¹,
 - having regard to successive reports from non-governmental organisations on matters affecting justice, human rights and civil liberties in the European Union,
- A. Whereas the various sources cited attest to the considerable room for improvement in the standards practised by current as well as new Member States in areas such as good governance and eradication of corruption; law enforcement and internal security; asylum and immigration; human rights and civil liberties including respect for privacy, minority rights, non-discrimination and due process;
- B. Whereas the recent credible reports urged that the Tampere agenda should take more account of fundamental rights observing that ‘an emphasis on human rights, at home will give the EU the legitimacy and credibility to pursue a more forceful human rights policy in its relations with the rest of the world’,
1. Agrees strongly with the Commission observation² that ‘what goes on in one Member State has consequences in the others.....[and] it is essential to.....maintain public confidence in areas such as...cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs’,
 2. Appeals to the current Member States as well as to the new to accept that there is a dynamic process at work since we aspire to ever-higher standards, such that the EU and Member States should not just rely on a passive process of ‘mutual recognition’ but should reinforce their efforts to strengthen the standards of justice being practised throughout the 25 Member States,
 3. Believes that in order to tackle the deficit in justice, freedom and security, a process of continued monitoring that applied only to new Member States would be incomplete and inadequate, and needs to be transformed into a culture and process of peer review and mutual surveillance encompassing all 25 Member States, in which the European Commission and the European Court of Justice, backed up by the European Parliament and the Council, would play key roles,
 4. Identifies a need to develop comprehensive and unambiguous EU justice standards within the EU, together with systematic scrutiny and enforcement mechanisms to ensure their observance; calls on the Commission to align the implementation of Article 39 of the Accession Treaty with the enforcement of Article 6 TEU;

¹ (COM(2003) 606).

² (COM(2003) 675, p3).

5. Desires the implementation as soon as possible of the important right of free movement for all EU citizens;
6. Supports the governments of all countries concerned in their efforts to continue a long-lasting and intensive policy addressing the problems of minorities (especially the Roma), aiming at their social integration through access to education, employment and housing;
7. Insists that all new Member States should take care that the EU's anti-discrimination *acquis* is fully transposed and implemented in their legislation;
8. Calls on the governments concerned to continue their efforts to eradicate discrimination against homosexuals;
9. Supports the new Member States in their fight against corruption and reminds all of them that corruption defrauds societies of the benefits of efficient allocation of often scarce but always limited public resources and that the fight against corruption will only succeed if it is conducted at all levels of society;
10. Insists on the need to further improve the security of the external borders of the enlarged Union by combating efficiently illegal trafficking and organised crime and to prepare for the fast realisation of the Schengen standards as a condition for free movement and on the need, at the same time, to pay due consideration to traditional cross-border economic and cultural relations between frontier populations;
11. Is concerned about the growing threat to diversity of the media from its concentration;
12. Points to the inadequate nature of asylum policy in the new Member States, notably with regards to statutory provisions, access to asylum procedures and lack of administrative capacities

Cyprus

13. Expresses its anxiety at the reports by the Cyprus Ombudsman that Cyprus has become an important transit point for trafficking in human beings, especially women which often implies forced prostitution and calls on Cyprus authorities to take all the necessary measures to fight against this new form of slavery;
14. calls on Maltese authorities to speed up the examination of the asylum requests so as to be in full compliance with the *acquis* ; calls also on the Commission to further support Malta in its efforts to reinforce its administrative capacity including the human resources dealing with the asylum procedure until accession and later in the framework of the transition fund;

Slovakia

15. Welcomes the measures adopted by the Slovak government to improve the protection of the country's eastern borders and calls on further increasing safety on the Slovak-Ukrainian border as a key to the successful integration of Slovakia into the Schengen Treaty;

16. Takes note that the Slovak government continues to improve its legislation as regards the asylum policy in compliance with the Geneva Convention, in order to achieve full alignment with the EU acquis ; draws in particular the attention to the necessity of speeding up the examination of the asylum requests.

22 January 2004

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AFFAIRS AND THE INTERNAL MARKET

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

on the comprehensive monitoring report of the European Commission on the state of preparedness for EU membership of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia
(COM(2003) 675 – C5 – 0532/2003 – 2201/2003(INI))

Draftsman: Ioannis Koukiadis

PROCEDURE

The Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market appointed Ioannis Koukiadis draftsman at its meeting of 6 November 2003.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 2 December 2003 and 22 January 2004.

At the last meeting it adopted the following suggestions unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Giuseppe Gargani (chairman), Bill Miller (vice-chairman), Ioannis Koukiadis (draftsman), Uma Aaltonen, Paolo Bartolozzi, Luis Berenguer Fuster (for Maria Berger), Ward Beysen, Bert Doorn, Raina A. Mercedes Echerer (substitute), Janelly Fourtou, Marie-Françoise Garaud, José María Gil-Robles Gil-Delgado, Kurt Lechner, Klaus-Heiner Lehne, Sir Neil MacCormick, Manuel Medina Ortega, Elena Ornella Paciotti (for Fiorella Ghilardotti), Anne-Marie Schaffner, Marianne L.P. Thyssen, Ian Twinn (for Malcolm Harbour), Diana Wallis, Joachim Wuermeling and Stefano Zappalà.

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the fact that the acceding countries have made good progress in aligning with the *acquis communautaire* in the areas of company law and accounting rules, customs legislation, and capital movements; regrets, however, that some countries are lagging behind in areas related to trade in goods, cross-border services, and recognition of diplomas and professional qualifications; regrets more especially the slowness to introduce minimum training requirements for a number of professions and the shortcomings in surveillance as regards both industrial products and foodstuffs;
2. Calls on the Commission to make it absolutely clear to the acceding countries that internal market legislation has to be adopted and in force on the day of accession and that no delay beyond that date can be tolerated, leaving aside the transitional provisions agreed in the accession negotiations;
3. Calls on the Commission to voice its anxieties regarding the numerous violations of intellectual and industrial property rights and the need to strengthen the role of the judiciary;
4. Believes that the Commission must constantly impress upon the acceding countries and make their peoples understand that the 'safeguard clauses' are a necessary means of limiting imperfect operation of the internal market and not a measure implying a lack of solidarity with the countries concerned;
5. Calls on the Commission to have no hesitation in employing the specific Accession Treaty provisions, be they corrective or support measures, so as to avert distortions in the workings of the internal market;
6. Applauds the remarkable results which the acceding countries have achieved overall as regards transposition of legislation and public administration, but considers that every one of the acceding countries needs to make further improvements in the sphere of human resources with a view to coordinating the different departments and authorities more closely and increasing the budgets available to them;
7. Maintains that an independent, neutral, and effective civil service is a *sine qua non* for a functioning market economy and for fostering a sound, investment-friendly economic environment; considers that this point applies even more directly to state regulators and supervisory authorities;
8. Calls for supervisory authorities to be provided with sufficient resources for the purpose of protecting personal data, since this is the only way to guarantee their independence, neutrality, and effectiveness;
9. Calls on the Commission to send a coherent clear message to the effect that the great opportunities opening up to the peoples of the acceding countries go hand in hand with obligations to implement EU legislation, especially to make the internal market run

smoothly, and, consequently, to stress that the possibility of an unfavourable assessment in the next monitoring report cannot be ruled out;

10. Maintains that it is vital for the judiciary, regulatory and managing authorities, and the various police forces to be properly coordinated, independent, and funded by resources enabling them to perform their tasks and that the efforts undertaken to date need to be intensified.
11. Points out that freedom of expression for all citizens and for Members of Parliament in particular must be guaranteed entirely beyond suspicion, in every candidate country, and that Members of Parliament must invariably be protected from any form of retaliation on account of views expressed in the performance of their duties; stresses its disquiet, therefore, at the recent attempt by the Latvian Parliament to remove one of its members from office as an observer in the EP.

26 January 2004

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

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

on the comprehensive monitoring report of the European Commission on the state of preparedness for EU membership of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia
(COM(2003) 675 – C5-0532/2003 – 2003/2201(INI))

Draftspersons: Miet Smet and Harald Ettl

PROCEDURE

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs appointed Miet Smet and Harald Ettl draftspersons at its meeting of 22 October 2003.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 16 December 2003 and 22 January 2004.

At the latter meeting it adopted the following suggestions unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Theodorus J.J. Bouwman, chairman; Marie-Hélène Gillig and Winfried Menrad, vice-chairpersons; Miet Smet and Harald Ettl, draftspersons; Anne André-Léonard, Elspeth Attwooll, Regina Bastos, Hans Udo Bullmann (for Jan Andersson), Ieke van den Burg, Luigi Cocilovo, Proinsias De Rossa, Carlo Fatuzzo, Ilda Figueiredo, Anne Elisabet Jensen (for Marco Formentini), Karin Jöns, Jean Lambert, Thomas Mann, Mario Mantovani, Claude Moraes, Neil Parish (for Raffaele Lombardo, pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Manuel Pérez Álvarez, Bartho Pronk, Lennart Sacrédeus, Herman Schmid, Elisabeth Schroedter (for Jillian Evans), Helle Thorning-Schmidt and Barbara Weiler.

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Warmly welcomes the overall considerable progress made by the countries and stresses that the few remaining problems cannot overshadow the fact that the coming enlargement will be a historic unification of the European continent and that the preparations for enlargement have been virtually completed in most areas of the Community acquis;
2. Stresses that after accession the overall goals and ambitions of a Social Europe will remain and cannot be lowered; stresses that social legislation is a necessary prerequisite and channel for the successful implementation of the Lisbon strategy in the enlarged Europe;
3. Stresses the need for both strong, competent employers' organisations and trade unions as cornerstones of a well-functioning social dialogue and participatory democracy; underlines the need for sufficient institutional resources, especially well-educated, experienced and dynamic staff and better financial independence; calls on the future Member States to make enhanced efforts in order to increase the collective bargaining coverage rate at sectoral and inter-sectoral level and to extend agreements also to non-signatories, as well as to encourage, through trade unions and employers' organisations, the corporate undertakings pursuing business in their respective countries to participate more actively in the social partnership process;
4. Calls on the new Member States to raise the importance of human capital in their political agenda; stresses the need to further promote a network of regional and local service institutions, for example employment exchanges, and active and sustainable labour market strategies to fight rising inactivity and stagnating unemployment; calls for action to combat the enormously high youth unemployment, especially in countries where the rate is far above 20%, for example Poland (41.5%), Slovakia (38.9%), Lithuania (30.9%), Estonia (24.5%), and Latvia (22.9%);
5. Hopes for intensive preparations for the European employment strategy, among other things to avert an exodus of skilled labour;
6. Stresses that there is a need for further developing a stable and sustainable social protection system, however, this process may not result in the largest part of the population having access to only average and limited services while a small part of the population, indeed those who can afford to take out additional insurance, has access to high-quality protection; recalls that a good social protection system has to be seen as a factor for productivity rather than a cost;
7. Regrets that, in spite of positive economic growth, poverty rates are still high in some countries; refers to the problem of the working poor: in work poverty is over 70% of poverty in Poland and Lithuania and over 40% in all other new Member States; recalls the need for further development in the analytical work and social statistic systems on poverty and social exclusion; warns of a massive and still-growing divide between urban and rural populations;

8. Calls on the Member States to educate and raise awareness in the public sphere about discrimination issues in order not only to ensure the correct implementation of the current acquis but also further development of provisions in the field of discrimination; calls on the new Member States to tackle the remaining pay gaps and other imbalances in work which are important in increasing the low female participation rate; calls on the new Member States to take steps to reduce discrimination on grounds of gender, race, nationality, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion, with particular focus on improving the treatment of ethnic minorities;
9. Points out that notwithstanding the fact that almost all countries made sufficient preparations in the field of health and safety at work, it is necessary to insist on the effective implementation of the acquis and all the necessary secondary legislation under the legal instruments embodying the policies on which the European social model is based; is concerned by the practice of offering higher rates of pay for working in dangerous conditions rather than implementing the acquis, which rules out the practice of taking risks in this way in return for money or some other form of reward;
10. Points out that the low life expectancy is due in part to the high rate of industrial accidents and occupational diseases; believes, therefore, that, observing the principles of the European strategy for 2002 to 2006, it is necessary to raise awareness and take preventive action by introducing the culture of health and safety at work as a horizontal policy;
11. Points to the need to use structural policy, and especially the European Social Fund, to link the differing levels of regional development to the goals of business promotion, tourism, culture, and nature conservation and to prevent the disparities from widening;
12. CZECH REPUBLIC
Urges for the effective implementation of the integrated employment and social inclusion strategy in the Czech Republic; warns that the many and varied forms of discrimination against and social marginalisation of the Roma in the Czech Republic are likewise continuing to give cause for disquiet;
13. ESTONIA
Points out that Estonia needs to take resolute steps to transpose a large part of the acquis in the fields of labour law, equal treatment of women and men and to do more to integrate ethnic minorities; regrets the shortcomings in the autonomous bilateral social dialogue between employer and employee representatives;
14. CYPRUS
Urges Cyprus to transpose the working time regulations in some sectors and to implement the framework directive and the individual provisions on workplace health hazards;
15. LATVIA
Asks Latvia to do more to integrate ethnic minorities; regrets the shortcomings in the autonomous bilateral social dialogue between employer and employee representatives and the lack of collective agreements; urges Latvia to transpose the working time regulations in some sectors;

16. LITHUANIA
Urges for the effective implementation of the integrated employment and social inclusion strategy in Lithuania; regrets some shortcomings in the autonomous bilateral social dialogue between employer and employee representatives in Lithuania;
17. HUNGARY
Underlines that the lack of financial and staff capacity in Hungary poses an obstacle to an effective social dialogue and expresses its disquiet at the fact that Hungary does not yet have the necessary rules governing the duty of employers to actively consult, inform, and involve employees or their representatives; looks to Hungary to set up the equality body required by the acquis and to continue to develop employment and integration strategies; warns that the many and varied forms of discrimination against and social marginalisation of the Roma in Hungary are likewise continuing to give cause for disquiet;
18. MALTA
Stresses that the lack of financial and staff capacity poses an obstacle to an effective social dialogue;
19. POLAND
Regrets that discrimination against women and older employees has not yet been properly eliminated in Poland urges the government to take effective steps to continue to develop employment and integration strategies and calls on Poland to incorporate gender mainstreaming into its labour law and to set up the equality body required by the acquis; underlines that a great deal of legislative work still needs to be done to bring Poland into line with the acquis regarding working time and part-time working, works councils, and the posting of workers and that there are serious shortcomings in the autonomous bilateral social dialogue between employer and employee representatives in Poland;
20. SLOVENIA
Urges Slovenia to transpose the working time regulations in some sectors; is worried about the shortcomings in the autonomous bilateral social dialogue between employer and employee representatives in Slovenia;
21. SLOVAKIA
Regrets that discrimination against women and older employees has not yet been properly eliminated in Slovakia urges the government to take effective steps to continue to develop employment and integration strategies; underlines that the lack of financial and staff capacity in Slovakia poses an obstacle to an effective social dialogue; asks Slovakia to transpose the working time regulations in some sectors; warns that the many and varied forms of discrimination against and social marginalisation of the Roma in Slovakia are likewise continuing to give cause for disquiet;
22. Calls on the European Commission to reorganise the management of the ESF by simplifying and decentralising it in order to make it more efficient; this involves management by objectives and proper evaluation based on results; urges the candidate countries to set up and or strengthen the administrative capacity and management structures for the co-ordination and implementation of projects sponsored by the ESF and warns of the risk of under-spending of the funds;

23. Regrets the fact that trafficking in women and children is still a large problem in several of the accession candidate countries; stresses the urgent need that the Commission, the Council and the accession states prevent and fight trafficking in human beings more efficiently at all levels, i.e. the police, the judiciary, the migration authorities and the social services, and that appropriate EU funding and technical assistance be provided.

28 January 2004

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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

on the comprehensive monitoring report of the European Commission on the state of preparedness for EU membership of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia
(COM(2003) 675 – C5-0532/2003 – 2003/2201(INI))

Draftsman: Karl Erik Olsson

PROCEDURE

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development appointed Karl Erik Olsson draftsman at its meeting of 4 November 2003.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 25 November 2003 and 26-27 January 2004.

At the latter meeting it adopted the following suggestions by 16 votes to 0 with 2 abstentions.

The following were present for the vote: Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf (chairman), Karl Erik Olsson (draftsman), Niels Busk, Francesco Fiori, Georges Garot, Lutz Goepel, Willi Görlach, María Izquierdo Rojo, Elisabeth Jeggle, Salvador Jové Peres, Hedwig Keppelhoff-Wiechert, Heinz Kindermann, Véronique Mathieu, Hans-Peter Mayer (for Michl Ebner), Xaver Mayer, Jan Mulder (for Giovanni Procacci), Mikko Pesälä and Dominique F.C. Souchet.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

With the accession of the new Member States on 1 May 2004, the social significance of agriculture in the EU will increase markedly. Only 4% of the gainfully employed population in the 15 existing Member States are employed in agriculture, whereas in the 10 enlargement countries, the average is more than 13% of the population.

Viewed in this light, it is not surprising that the funding of agriculture and rural development were the main topics of discussion in the final phase of enlargement negotiations up to the European Council meeting in Copenhagen in December 2002. The development of agriculture and the countryside and public support for it will also be a recurrent theme for the 25 Member States of the EU in the years to come.

The new EU must, therefore, focus - to an even greater extent than before - on a strong and competitive, but also sustainable agricultural sector which can make its contribution towards positive social development and a better quality of life. This is a matter of particular importance in rural regions with few other opportunities for employment and income.

There are enormous differences in both the old and new Member States between effective, intensive agriculture, on the one hand, and a large group of smaller farms with far less developed production methods, on the other. There will also continue to be major geographical differences between countries and regions which strongly affect agriculture. This highlights the fact that the challenge in future reforms of the common agricultural policy consists in diverting a large part of the EU's agricultural budget from indiscriminate production aid to the development of quality, food safety, animal welfare, new forms of production and industry which counteract depopulation and actually make rural areas attractive by providing good social conditions and job opportunities for the population. At the same time, the sector must be made competitive and steps should be taken to ensure that the EU's agricultural policy does not distort competition on the international markets.

The administration of the common agricultural policy is a complicated and demanding public task which involves handling large amounts of money in the Member States. It is therefore a cause for great concern that the Commission has noted that the public bodies in several countries do not have sufficient resources, skills or independence to ensure reliable implementation of EU law, at the same time as corruption in the public sector continues to be extremely widespread in most of the new Member States.

An alarming consequence of the lack of preparation in public administration is that several of the countries have still not set up the administrative bodies to pay aid to farmers. These failings may have particularly unfortunate consequences for the rural population and create major difficulties in the first period of the new countries' membership.

The structure of agriculture in several of the new Member States will need to undergo major changes if agriculture is to be made effective and market-oriented. It is important in this process to take offensive measures to prevent unemployment in the countryside from rocketing. With a developed administration and a well-worked development programme, however, the 10 countries may have certain advantages over the EU 15 in terms of rural development.

Instead of having to combat increasing urbanisation by trying to turn the tide, as is the case in several of the present Member States, it is possible to pursue a policy of diversification of employment in the countryside to enable people to stay. It is important that the structures for rural policy are fully operational so that they can absorb the generous resources available, primarily in the first two years.

It is encouraging that most of the new Member States are a long way down the road in developing their rural policies. Of the 10 perspective Member States, only Hungary has serious problems. Malta and Poland partly meet the requirements but must step up their efforts in this area.

The draftsman, however, takes the view that not only the EU's new Members but also the Commission have a great responsibility to ensure that the relevant administrative bodies are set up. The Commission - together with the countries concerned - should therefore be asked to make an extra effort through to 1 May 2004. In addition to the problems described in the reports, the Commission should also explain in more detail how there can still be such serious problems at this late stage in the enlargement process ('red alert' areas) that the accession of certain countries could genuinely be at risk, even though the Commission has unequivocally confirmed 1 May 2004 as the date of accession. There is a need for vision and to remedy mistakes and failures. The emphasis must therefore be on allocating political responsibility but, to a greater extent, to ensure that both the Commission itself and the new countries have precise knowledge as to where the practical problems have arisen and why they have not been resolved earlier in the process. The draftsman is convinced that such knowledge will be instrumental in devising faster and more effective solutions.

The Commission's conclusions are based on the situation as it was on 30 September 2003. The draftsman regards this as a problem since, for some areas, the information dates from before the summer recess. In many cases, legislation and new initiatives may have been initiated and adopted once governments and parliaments resumed their work in the autumn. As there are only a few months left until enlargement, the Commission should obtain full information on the most recent activities in the new Member States which are designed to meet the requirements for accession.

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas smoothly operating, competitive and sustainable agriculture is highly important in ensuring harmonious and sustainable social development,
- B. whereas only complete and correct implementation of the *acquis communautaire* in relation to agricultural policy will ensure appropriate development,
- C, whereas the common agricultural policy is one of the areas in the accession treaty where the Commission can introduce further transitional measures to offset problems with implementing the *acquis communautaire*, after each of the ten countries have become full members of the EU,
- D. notes that the imminent structural changes in agriculture in the new Member States requires an operational rural policy. It is encouraging that 7 of the ten new Member States do not appear to have any problems with introducing a policy for rural areas in time,

In general

- 1. Welcomes the Commission's methodical and thorough evaluation of each country as a detailed overview is a necessary tool for work on those areas where progress and further action by the new Member States are required;
- 2. Welcomes the Commission's unequivocal judgment, in the light of this thorough analysis, that the common agricultural policy can be applied in all ten new Member States as of their accession;
- 3. Welcomes the enormous effort made at all levels in the new Member States to carry out administrative reforms, adopt and implement legislation and introduce norms and standards, through which they have attained the objective of accession;
- 4. Notes regretfully that major unresolved problems remain; is concerned, in that connection, that the central administration and other parts of the public administration in several countries are still not in a position to ensure due implementation of EU law, including payment of agricultural support; considers that the widespread corruption in the public sector in this context gives cause for particularly serious concern;
- 5. Agrees with the Commission that all shortcomings in terms of financial management must be remedied no later than 30 April 2004, otherwise it will not be possible to pay out EU funds in a number of areas;
- 6. Notes that no country entirely escaped criticism in the Commission's report; notes, however, with satisfaction that there are no serious problems in the case of Estonia, Lithuania and Slovenia;

7. Calls on the countries to take all necessary steps to improve organisational structures before their accession; stresses, at the same time, that the Commission should play a more active role to help the future Member States to develop the necessary administrative units and structures;
8. Takes a particularly serious view of a number of problems in relation to food safety and public health, including a lack of alignment with Community standards in relation to processing plants and border control posts with third countries; is strongly concerned about the little progress made by most accession countries with regard to veterinary legislation, especially concerning BSE risk prevention and treatment of animal offals; insists that concerning food safety urgent progress is needed;
9. Notes that the EU food hygiene regulations are currently being revised, but have been interpreted very strictly in some accession countries in order to restructure the food processing sector through concentration of production units and closing down small enterprises;
10. Calls upon the Commission to apply the same level of flexibility in old and new member states with regard to hygiene rules for direct or local marketing and traditional food processing, to distinguish between requirements on hygiene improving public health and infrastructural demands of industrial food processing, and to take into account local and regional markets, employment and food preferences of producers and consumers in the respective regions;
11. Is concerned that some of the new countries have had major problems with implementing measures within SAPARD, resulting in delays in paying funds, in some cases not even beginning before 2003 owing to administrative shortcomings; considers that it should be possible, in a transitional phase, to transfer money for rural development not used during the financial year to next year's budget;
12. Hopes that the participation of the new Member States in the common agricultural policy will ensure a positive development for rural areas, which will promote welfare and quality of life; calls on the Commission to take initiatives designed to prevent social disruption in the form of emigration from rural areas and a rise in unemployment; underlines the importance of semi-subsistence farming and stresses the need for support for these farms;
13. Notes that many accession countries have taken measures after 30 September 2003, which is the date when the latest information was collected in the present reports; calls on the Commission, however, to obtain complete information on developments in the accession countries since that date; considers that it is absolutely necessary to obtain data about developments in the most recent period, as enlargement is now immediately imminent; expresses the hope in this connection that the criticisms levelled in this opinion at individual accession countries have diminished in importance as a result of positive developments and efforts over recent months and that they will be completely groundless by the accession date of 1 May 2004;

The Czech Republic

14. Welcomes the abolition of the Czech districts on 1 January 2003 and the subsequent transfer of competences to regions and new municipalities; believes that decentralisation will pave the way for improved territorial public administration in rural areas;
15. Welcomes the fact that the Czech Republic has already completed implementation in many sectors, including the important area of rural development;
16. Regrets the fact that implementation of the reforms adopted in respect of the Czech central administration is behind schedule; expresses its concern that this may, in particular, have unfortunate consequences for the ability of the Czech Republic to set up an official paying agency and the integrated administration and control system in time, which may completely or partially make it impossible for the country to receive funds from the EU's agricultural budget; calls on the Commission to increase assistance to the Czech authorities with a view to resolving all outstanding problems;
17. Hopes for speedy progress with the Czech Republic's implementation of the common organisation of the market in a number of sectors, including sugar, wine and beef;
18. Is concerned that in a number of areas relating to food safety, plant and animal health, animal welfare and feed regulation, there are such serious problems that the Commission has expressed doubt about the Czech Republic's ability to resolve the situation before the country's accession to the EU; hopes that the Czech Republic will take swift and effective action to remedy these shortcomings;

Estonia

19. Welcomes the fact that the necessary systems for administering the common agricultural policy are largely in place; is particularly satisfied that the Commission has not found any problems of a serious nature within that chapter;
20. Considers that Estonia will be capable of overcoming the difficulties which still exist in certain common organisations of the market before EU membership becomes a reality;
21. Calls however on Estonia to make a greater effort to resolve veterinary and phytosanitary problems such as the introduction of appropriate control and inspection systems;

Cyprus

22. Regrets the fact that Cyprus is behind schedule in setting up a paying agency as payment of funds from the EU's budget for agriculture and rural development for Cyprus are in jeopardy;
23. Is concerned at the inadequate preparations in relation to trade mechanisms and expects Cyprus to take immediate measures to implement the *acquis communautaire*;

Latvia

24. Calls on the Commission to help the Latvian authorities ensure that organisational and, in particular, IT-related problems are resolved, so that the paying agency will be able to operate as of the date of accession;
25. Calls on Latvia to submit its plans for rural development under the EAGGF Guarantee Section to the Commission as soon as possible;
26. Notes with satisfaction that Latvia has set up the necessary administrative structures for quality control; considers that Latvia will be able to achieve full implementation of Community legislation relating to plant health;
27. Expresses concern about Latvia's incomplete transposition of legislation on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) and animal by-products, since these matters are of immense importance to public health in all parts of the enlarged Union; urges the Latvian authorities to implement swift and radical measures in order to remedy the problems;

Lithuania

28. Welcomes the good progress made by Lithuania towards fulfilling the requirements of the accession negotiations, including such important areas as FADN, CMOs and rural development;
29. Calls on the Lithuanian authorities to adopt the necessary legislation promptly with a view to the formal establishment of a paying agency and the integrated administrative and control system; calls on the Commission to provide the country with all necessary assistance to resolve the outstanding tasks, particularly the solution of IT problems;
30. Is concerned at Lithuania's failure fully to establish veterinary controls in respect of the internal market; notes, however, with satisfaction that control facilities at the country's border posts with third countries are generally adequate;

Malta

31. Calls on the Maltese authorities to give top priority to setting up an integrated administrative and control system and calls on the Commission to provide the country with all necessary assistance in that area;
32. Expresses concern about Malta's incomplete transposition of legislation on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) and animal by-products since these matters are of immense importance to public health in all parts of the enlarged Union; urges the Maltese authorities to take all necessary measures in order to remedy the problems;
33. Considers that the shortcomings in setting up border posts with third countries give cause for concern and that this situation should be remedied promptly;

Hungary

34. Expresses great concern at the prospect that a paying agency and the integrated administrative and control system will not be set up in time, which may make it completely or partly impossible for the country to receive funds from the EU's agriculture budget; calls on the Commission to increase its aid to Hungary in respect of all organisational matters and, in particular, problems with setting up and preparing IT systems for operation;
35. Deeply regrets the incomplete implementation of current Community law (*acquis communautaire*) in Hungary in the food safety sector; considers that veterinary control and the setting up of border posts with third countries are matters giving serious cause for concern which should be remedied immediately;
36. Calls on Hungary to submit a proposal for rural programmes as soon as possible and to clarify the division of responsibility and coordination with other measures; calls on the Commission to increase its aid to enable Hungary to fulfil the *acquis*;

Poland

37. Expresses great concern at the large number of important sectors in the agriculture chapter where Poland's implementation of the *acquis communautaire* is still so inadequate that serious doubts must be raised as to the country's actual desire to be ready by accession;
38. Notes that the problems include a paying agency, the integrated administrative and control system, control of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE), animal by-products and a number of other areas within the fields of animal and plant health;
39. Stresses Poland's status as the biggest of the new Member States by far and, therefore, its greater significance for the entire enlargement; considers that if Poland joins the Union on an inadequate basis, there is great potential for damaging repercussions for all 25 future Member States;
40. Calls on the Polish authorities and the Polish Government to take exceptional measures to remedy the wide range of serious, unresolved problems; calls on the Commission to adopt a special strategy as quickly as possible to assist in resolving the outstanding problems in Poland;
41. Welcomes the fact that Poland will be able to implement its rural programme from 1 January 2004 by making an extra effort; stresses that it is of great importance for Poland, which has the largest agriculture sector among the new Member States, that measures are in place from the outset to diversify employment in rural areas and to give a boost to environment-friendly agriculture;

Slovenia

42. Greatly welcomes the many areas within the agriculture chapter in which Slovenia is completely ready for membership of the EU; notes that the country appears able to achieve implementation of the *acquis communautaire* in all areas before accession;

Slovakia

43. Notes that Slovakia has still failed to set up a payment agency and the integrated administrative and control system; warns that these failings may have adverse consequences in terms of the country's full participation in the EU's common agricultural policy from the outset of its membership;
44. Regrets the fact that Slovakia has not yet implemented Community legislation on trade in live animals and animal products; is concerned at the serious failings in the food safety sector relating to processing plants and calls on the Slovakian authorities to ensure that these plants promptly fall into line with EU rules and standards.

26 January 2004

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL POLICY, TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

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

on the comprehensive monitoring report of the European Commission on the state of preparedness for EU membership of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia
(COM(2003) 675 – C5–0532/2003 – 2003/2201(INI))

Draftsperson: Brigitte Wenzel-Perillo

PROCEDURE

The Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism appointed Brigitte Wenzel-Perillo draftswoman at its meeting of 25 November 2003.

It considered the draft opinion at its meeting of 20-21 January 2004.

At this meeting it adopted the following suggestions by 42 votes to 1, with 3 abstentions.

The following were present for the vote: Paolo Costa (chairman), Rijk van Dam, Gilles Savary, Helmuth Markov, (vice-chairmen), Brigitte Wenzel-Perillo (draftsperson), Sylviane H. Ainardi, Pedro Aparicio Sánchez (for Danielle Darras), Rolf Berend, Graham H. Booth (to Alain Esclopé), Philip Charles Bradbourn, Felipe Camisón Asensio, Luigi Cocilovo, Christine de Veyrac, Jan Dhaene, Den Dover (for James Nicholson), Jacqueline Foster, Mathieu J.H. Grosch, Konstantinos Hatzidakis, Ewa Hedkvist Petersen, Juan de Dios Izquierdo Collado, Georg Jarzembowski, Constanze Angela Krehl (for Garrelt Duin), Dieter-Lebrecht Koch, Ioannis Koukiadis (for John Hume pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Giorgio Lisi, Sérgio Marques, Emmanouil Mastorakis, Erik Meijer, Rosa Miguélez Ramos, Bill Miller (for Giovanni Claudio Fava), Enrique Monsonís Domingo, Francesco Musotto, Josu Ortuondo Larrea, Peter Pex, Wilhelm Ernst Piecyk, Samuli Pohjamo, Alonso José Puerta, Reinhard Rack, Carlos Ripoll y Martínez de Bedoya, Dana Rosemary Scallon, Ingo Schmitt, Elisabeth Schroedter (for Nelly Maes), Brian Simpson, Renate Sommer, Ulrich Stockmann, Herman Vermeer.

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

Regional policy and Structural Funds

1. Welcomes the fact that the accession States should be able to apply the "acquis communautaire" as from joining the Union in the areas of territorial organisation and programming as far as regional policy and the co-ordination of structural instruments are concerned;
2. Regrets, however, that in all ten accession countries even greater efforts are necessary to complete preparation for membership in connection with the legal framework for regional policy, the co-ordination of structural instruments as well as institutional structures, and above all in the areas of financial management and financial control;
3. Calls on the Commission to ensure that, as part of its future proposals concerning regional policy for 25 Member States, particular attention is paid to strengthening consistency between regional policy and the policy of sustainable mobility so as to forestall (bearing in mind the current split between modes of transport in the 10 new Member States) large-scale switches in modes of transport from waterways and rail to roads;

Transport policy

4. Notes with satisfaction that most accession states will be able to give effect to the "acquis communautaire" in most transports modes from accession onwards;
5. Observes nevertheless that in the air transport sector, Estonia, Cyprus and Latvia must undertake further efforts to be able to apply the 'acquis communautaire' - in particular with regard to aviation safety - as from accession; that a similar effort is necessary in the road transport sector in Cyprus and Slovakia; and that this is also the case for the rail sector in Hungary and the maritime sector in Estonia and Poland;
6. Is concerned that so little effort is being made in Poland's rail sector to retain and improve its dense network, and stresses that modal shift by 2010 is a goal of EU transport policy (see Commission White Paper);
7. Expresses its disappointment with the lack of progress in the road transport sector, and above all in its social, technical, safety and environmental standards aspects in the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, where decisive measures will have to be taken to ensure that there is alignment with the 'acquis communautaire' upon accession;
8. Records its concern arising from the situation in the maritime sector in Cyprus and Malta where significant steps will have to be taken immediately to overcome difficulties before accession, especially in the area of maritime safety and the situation regarding flags of convenience.

22 January 2004

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

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

on the comprehensive monitoring report of the European Commission on the state of preparedness for EU membership of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia
(COM(2003) 675 – C5–0532/2003 – 2003/2201(INI))

Draftsperson: Lone Dybkjær

PROCEDURE

The Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities appointed Lone Dybkjær draftsperson at its meeting of 4 November 2003.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 4 December 2003 and 20 January 2004.

At the last meeting it adopted the following conclusions unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Anna Karamanou (chairwoman, Marianne Eriksson (vice-chairwoman), Lone Dybkjær (draftsperson), Ulla Maija Aaltonen, Regina Bastos, Lissy Gröner, Mary Honeyball, Christa Klaß, Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Astrid Lulling, Thomas Mann, Maria Martens, Elizabeth Montfort (for Robert Goodwill pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Christa Prets, Amalia Sartori, Olle Schmidt (for Johanna L.A. Boogerd-Quaak), Patsy Sørensen, Joke Swiebel, Elena Valenciano Martínez-Orozco.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following points in its motion for a resolution:

1. Emphasises that the European Parliament has continuously stressed and still fully supports that adoption of the EC *acquis* in the area of equality between women and men is a *sine qua non* condition for accession since it is essentially a question of human rights and that the necessary institution building or reinforcement of institutional and administrative capacity in this area is a vital prerequisite to full implementation of the *acquis*;
2. Reminds the Commission and the accession countries that equality is listed among the values of the European Union which have to be respected by the Member States, likewise the promotion of equality between women and men and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all areas of political activity are clear objectives of the Union;
3. Applauds the progress made in the transposition of the equality *acquis* in almost all the accession countries, some of which have made huge efforts in a relatively short period of time;
4. Especially applauds the appointment of a Minister without portfolio in charge of equal opportunities in Hungary in May 2003; likewise applauds Slovenia for having set up a specific implementing structure for the hearing of cases of alleged unequal treatment of women and men and the issuing of opinions within the Office for Equal Opportunities; finally applauds Latvia for having established a Gender Equality Council and encourages all other accession countries, as well as Member States, which still do not have such mechanisms to follow the examples of these three countries where necessary;
5. Welcomes the fact that the Estonian government on 8 January finally approved a new draft Gender Equality Act and submitted it to Parliament. Is very concerned, however, of the very late date of approval and reminds the Estonian government and Parliament that approval and transposition of the equality legislation has to be greatly speeded up. Requests that the Commission ensures that Estonia speeds up the transposition of the equality *acquis* and ensures that sanctions are imposed if this request is not followed up efficiently;
6. Is worried about the fact that unemployment rates are still considerably higher for women than for men in several candidate countries and that youth employment represents a serious problem in most of them, being twice as high as the average unemployment rate;
7. Is worried about the fact that all ten accession countries still have not fully transposed the anti-discrimination *acquis*, notably all countries still need to establish the Equality Body required by the *acquis*. Some countries such as Slovenia and Lithuania are well under way, whereas others, notably Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia, still have large problems in relation to discrimination of the Roma minorities and Latvia still has some problems in relation to real integration of the Russian minority. Underlines that, in dealing with anti-discrimination and integration of minorities, it is crucial to analyse the gender perspective as well; in this regard also expresses considerable concern that Malta still has

not fully transposed the Directive on equal treatment in employment and demands that this happens before accession;

8. Emphasises that accession must not be geared solely to gaining access to the benefits of the internal market, but that the requisite measures must also be taken with a view to increasing the participation of women on the labour market, a precondition if women are to achieve social and economic independence;
9. Is deeply worried that female representation at the next European Parliament elections risks falling dramatically because of very low female political representation in the accession countries; therefore, calls on the Commission and the accession countries to support financially women's NGO's in the accession countries so that they can establish information programmes specifically designated to prepare and train female candidates for the European Parliament elections in June 2004, taking account of the conclusions of the Ministerial Conference held in Syracuse on the participation of women in decision and policy-making processes, which provide for a minimum 30% representation of women on their lists of candidates standing in the European elections. Calls on the political parties in all Member States to introduce positive action systems to promote a balanced representation of women and men and to review their party structures to avoid any form of gender discrimination, direct or indirect. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support financially women's NGO's arranging awareness raising campaigns to promote a better political participation of women at the next European elections.