

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0034/06

pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure

by Elmar Brok, Pierre Moscovici and Geoffrey Van Orden, on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

to the Commission

Subject: Accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU

Article 39 of the Treaty of Accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union provides that in the event of a serious risk of a state being manifestly unprepared to meet the requirements of membership by 1 January 2007, the Council may postpone the date of accession by one year. It is for the Commission to propose such a step for consideration by the Council.

In the plenary debate on 12 April 2005, preceding Parliament's assent to the Treaty of Accession, the Council Presidency confirmed that full account will be taken of Parliament's position on the possible invoking of safeguard measures.

President Barroso confirmed to President Borrell in his letter of 7 April 2005 that 'the Commission would seriously consider the views of the Parliament on the possible use of the postponement clause before issuing any recommendation in this regard, in order to fully associate the European Parliament to any possible decision to postpone accession'.

In view of the progress made by Bulgaria and Romania towards fulfilling the commitments required by the Treaty of Accession, can the Commission confirm that the overall content, direction, and rhythm of reform in the two countries is such that they will be ready for accession by 31 December 2006, notwithstanding some particular areas of concern which may require special measures?

Would the Commission agree that, in particular, the reform of the judiciary and the fight against corruption and organised crime are areas of concern needing more decisive efforts and results from Bulgaria and Romania?

Can the Commission provide a clarification of the possibilities in regard to safeguard clauses and other possible measures and what they mean in practical terms, especially in the area of justice and home affairs?

Would the Commission consider introducing a 'close monitoring system' throughout the first three years after accession during which safeguard clauses could be invoked?

Could the Commission indicate the pros and cons for making a recommendation respectively in May or in the autumn:

- a) in regard to the timing of accession by Bulgaria and Romania and
- b) in regard to safeguard clauses and any other measures that might possibly be necessary?

Tabled: 10.04.2006

Forwarded: 12.04.2006

Deadline for reply: 19.04.2006