

**Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006–2007**

**European Parliament resolution on the Commission's Communication on the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006–2007 (2006/2252(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission's Communication on the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006–2007 (COM(2006)0649),
- having regard to its resolution of 27 September 2006 on Turkey's progress towards accession<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the Presidency conclusions of the Copenhagen European Council of 21-22 June 1993 and of the Madrid European Council of 15-16 December 1995, of the Luxembourg European Council of 12-13 December 1997, of the Thessaloniki European Council of 19-20 June 2003 and of the Brussels Councils of 16-17 December 2004, 16-17 June 2005 and 15-16 June 2006,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 March 2006 on the 2005 enlargement strategy paper<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2006 on the period of reflection: the structure, subjects and context for an assessment of the debate on the European Union<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A6-0436/2006),

Whereas:

- A. the European Union is a political project based on shared values and commonly pursued objectives,
- B. the EU has evolved into a political union of democracies which is itself committed to democratic standards and to developing a vivid democratic culture,
- C. the incentive offered by the prospect of EU membership has undeniably contributed to the promotion of reforms, the consolidation of democracy, increased respect for human rights and increasing stability in neighbouring countries,
- D. the Thessaloniki European Council of 19-20 June 2003 reaffirmed the commitment to full implementation of the Thessaloniki agenda, and the Brussels European Council of 15-16 June 2006 reaffirmed the intention to honour the existing commitments made to the South-East European countries (Turkey and Croatia, countries with which accession negotiations are underway, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia/FYROM, as candidate country, and the Western Balkans countries, as potential candidates) concerning

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<sup>1</sup> *Texts Adopted*, P6\_TA(2006)0381.

<sup>2</sup> *Texts Adopted*, P6\_TA(2006)0096.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 287 E, 24.11.2006, p. 306.

enlargement, while emphasising the need to ensure that the Union "is able to function politically, financially and institutionally as it enlarges",

- E. the EU must proceed from its irreversible commitment to democracy and from its understanding that democracy only functions if the *demos* – the citizenry of Europe – recognises and supports its own enlargement through the accession of new Member States and integration of their citizens,
- F. the European Parliament, in conjunction with national parliaments, and with the support of regional and local authorities and civil society bodies, can contribute to improving transparency and accountability of the enlargement process and thereby increase public consensus on this issue,
- G. enlargement should – as laid down in the Treaty – contribute to the European integration process and to the achievement of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe but not undermine the political nature of this project; it should promote peace, security, stability, democracy and prosperity in Europe,
- H. for that reason, the Union's integration capacity must be taken into account when consideration is given to the future of the Union,
- I. the declaration issued at the European Council in Copenhagen of 21-22 June 1993 mentioned as an important consideration 'the Union's capacity to absorb new members, while maintaining the momentum of European integration',
- J. Member States and the EU Institutions must address courageously the institutional, financial and political factors which underlie the Union's capacity to integrate new Member States,
- K. this presupposes a thorough analysis of the implications which increased membership may entail for the Union's cohesion policies and for its finances,
- L. integration capacity is an evolutionary concept which must be assessed regularly in the light of new circumstances,
- M. integration capacity is based on objective criteria and addresses real problems and therefore should not be confused with public perception of the impact of further enlargements,
- N. integration capacity is not a new criterion applicable to the candidate countries but a pre-requisite for the success of enlargement and for deepening the process of European integration; responsibility for improving its integration capacity lies with the Union and not with the candidate countries,
- O. acceding and candidate countries must comply with the accession criteria established by the Copenhagen European Council (Copenhagen criteria) and all other obligations stemming from the Treaties and bilateral agreements,
- 1. Agrees with the Commission that past enlargements have been a success, have strengthened the European Union by stimulating its economic growth, reinforcing its role in the world and promoting the development of new EU policies, and have promoted

democracy, peace and prosperity in Europe; emphasises that enlargement in general is among the most effective instruments of foreign policy and conflict prevention policies of the EU; recalls that this success derives from the widespread support for past enlargements as the fulfilment of the initial mission of European integration to reunite the European continent after the political divisions of the twentieth century;

2. Notes nevertheless that lessons can be learned from past experience, notably the need to judge each candidate country on its own merits and to negotiate its accession in accordance with a timetable based on effective compliance with the Copenhagen criteria, as well as the need to avoid setting too early a date for final accession;
3. Believes that these lessons should be used to improve the quality and transparency of the enlargement process;
4. Is of the opinion that the Union should honour its commitments to the countries which already have membership prospects, provided that those countries comply with the Copenhagen criteria and fulfil the obligations arising therefrom; emphasises that fulfilment of these commitments is a strong incentive for those countries to pursue their reforms;
5. Agrees that consolidation, conditionality and communication are the guiding principles of the EU's enlargement strategy; is of the view that any further commitment to enlarge will require far more in-depth scrutiny than ever before of the question of the Union's integration capacity, be it from an institutional, financial or political standpoint;
6. Therefore regrets the Commission's failure to provide a sufficiently in-depth analysis of the issues which need to be resolved before the Union can proceed with further enlargements;
7. Considers the 'Special report on the EU's capacity to integrate new members' in Annex I of the Communication, an unsatisfactory answer to Parliament's request, in paragraph 5 of its abovementioned resolution of 16 March 2006, for a 'report ... setting out the principles which underpin this concept';
8. Is of the opinion that the integration capacity of the Union rests fundamentally on three pillars, namely its institutions and their legitimacy and ability to act and take decisions democratically and efficiently under new circumstances, its financial resources and their overall contribution to economic and social cohesion, and the capacity of an enlarged Union to pursue its political objectives;
9. Recalls that responsibility for improving its integration capacity therefore lies with the Union and not with the candidate countries;
10. Believes that the EU can only expect its citizens to have a positive attitude towards enlargement if they see a Europe that delivers results; emphasises, therefore, that integration capacity cannot be seen in isolation from the EU's capacity to act; considers that enlargement should be a part of the Union's Citizens' Agenda and should be communicated accordingly;
11. Considers that the Union's proper functioning rests on the unqualified adherence of all its members to the universal values that underlie the EU as a political project: the inalienable and inviolable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of

law which make up the European identity;

12. Believes that any failure to ensure that the EU's integration capacity matches its enlargement agenda would weaken the Union internally and externally and reduce the benefits of increased membership for all its members, and that this effect would not be compensated by increased external size;
13. Criticises the Commission for the superficial way in which it deals with the institutional aspects, and refers in this respect to its resolution of 13 December 2006 on the institutional aspects of the EU's capacity to integrate new Member States<sup>4</sup>;
14. Recalls the terms of its abovementioned resolution of 19 January 2006 and reaffirms that, following the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the Treaty of Nice will not provide an adequate basis for further enlargements;
15. Therefore urges the Heads of State and Government to conclude the constitutional process by the end of 2008, as stated at the European Council in Brussels of June 2006, in order to enable the Union to work more effectively, more transparently and more democratically, which is a pre-requisite for further enlargements;
16. Reminds Heads of State and Government of their duty to complete this process before the next European elections, so as to avoid delay in current accession negotiations;
17. Emphasises that the institutional reform of the Union is a need per se, regardless of further enlargements, and should be pursued rigorously and expeditiously;
18. Confirms that accession negotiations will progress according to the merits and achievements of each negotiating partner;
19. Welcomes and supports the Commission's commitment to improve the quality of the accession process by making it more benchmark-driven and transparent and by systematically making impact assessments on key policy areas at key stages of the process;
20. Takes the view that the planned revision of the Union's budget in 2008/2009 must take account of the future integration of the current candidate and pre-candidate countries;
21. Points out that the Commission's Communication does not deal thoroughly with the financial implications of further enlargements and calls on the Commission to provide clear and credible estimates of the budgetary implications before any further accession;
22. Reiterates that this debate involves difficult issues which might have implications for the Union's common policies, including its cohesion policies;
23. Takes the view that the financial implications of further enlargements, the complexity of which has been implicitly recognised by Heads of State and Government when they declined to take them into account in the 2007-2013 financial framework, must be urgently addressed; calls on the General Affairs and ECOFIN Councils to hold a joint debate on this issue;

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<sup>4</sup> *Texts Adopted*, P6\_TA(2006)0569.

24. Emphasises that compliance with the political criteria set out at the Copenhagen European Council, including in the area of the rule of law, should be given greater priority than has hitherto been the case in accession negotiations, and that a direct link should be established between those criteria and the start, as well as the overall pace, of negotiations;
25. Welcomes in this respect the inclusion in the current negotiating framework of a chapter on Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, covering the political issues, which will enable EU institutions to closely scrutinise progress in these crucial areas;
26. Is of the opinion that in previous enlargements progress in the fields of justice, corruption and fundamental rights did not receive enough attention in the early phases of negotiations; pledges to take a much more active role in monitoring the accession process, with particular emphasis on its political aspects, and calls upon the Council to do the same and to issue clear and duly reasoned recommendations to candidate countries, rather than merely take note of technical progress in the negotiations;
27. Recalls the clear European membership prospects which the Thessaloniki European Council of 19-20 June 2003 offered to the western Balkan countries; remains fully committed to these prospects which have to be maintained in order to consolidate stability and peace in the region; reminds those countries that they will each be assessed on the basis of their own merits and that this will determine the pace of their integration into the EU;
28. Welcomes the Council's decision of 13 November 2006 to adopt the negotiation mandates for visa facilitation and re-admission agreements with western Balkan countries as a first step in promoting people-to-people contacts between those countries and the EU; emphasises, however, that the objective is visa-free travel;
29. Welcomes the continued progress made by the candidate country Croatia towards EU integration and calls on the negotiators on both sides to maintain the momentum achieved in these negotiations, with a view to their early conclusion;
30. Notes the Commission's Turkey 2006 Progress Report, which, whilst stating that political reforms in Turkey have continued, points out that their pace has slowed down and confirms the shortcomings in the reform process already laid out in Parliament's abovementioned resolution of 27 September 2006 on Turkey's progress towards accession; insists that this also includes the ratification and full implementation by Turkey of the Additional Protocol extending the EC–Turkey Association Agreement to the ten new Member States, signed by Turkey in July 2005, in compliance with the EU Declaration of 21 September 2005;
31. Stresses that the Turkish refusal to fully comply with the terms of the Additional Protocol is seriously endangering the good progress of the accession negotiations; points out that the Council decision not to open the negotiations on eight important chapters covering policy areas relevant to Turkey's restrictions as regards the Republic of Cyprus and not to close provisionally any chapters is an unavoidable consequence of Turkey's position on this issue; urges Turkey to cooperate in a constructive way to ensure full implementation of the Additional Protocol as soon as possible; welcomes in this respect the invitation addressed to the Commission to submit yearly reports on progress made in addressing the issues covered by the EU declaration of 21 September 2005;

32. deplores the fact that the efforts of the Finnish Presidency to find a solution to the current stalemate regarding the full implementation of the Additional Protocol the one hand and further alleviating the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot Community on the other were not successful; calls on the German Presidency to continue these efforts with determination in close co-operation with UN efforts;
33. Takes the view that the European Union must be prepared to adopt a timetable to ensure that the above goals can be achieved within a reasonable period of time;
34. Urges the Council to take on new commitments only on the basis of an in-depth assessment of their institutional, financial, political and socio-economic consequences; therefore calls on the Commission to provide comprehensive impact assessments whenever it considers new applications for membership and when it submits its recommendations on the opening and closing of negotiations;
35. Recalls that, during accession negotiations, when the Council, acting by unanimity on a proposal of the Commission, lays down benchmarks for the opening and provisional closure of each chapter, Member States should act even-handedly with regard to all accession countries;
36. Believes that Parliament's right of assent should apply not just after the conclusion of the negotiation process but also before the opening of membership negotiations;
37. Notes that, as the EU continues to conduct, and open, enlargement negotiations with the countries of the Balkans, tackling endemic corruption and regional organised crime networks will become an increasingly important feature on the road to accession; strongly recommends, therefore, that current enlargement financial instruments are strengthened and re-focused so as to target, as a top priority, the fight against corruption and organised crime, with particular emphasis on reforming judiciaries, reinforcing public administrative capacity and improving cross-border cooperation;
38. Reminds Member States' governments and national parliaments that it is their responsibility to inform the public adequately about the benefits of past enlargements and the stakes involved in further enlargements, and that they should provide the public with reasons for the decisions they take, unanimously, throughout the accession process;
39. Therefore calls on the Commission to work together with Member States, the European Parliament and national parliaments in order to communicate the enlargement agenda more effectively to the public, thus improving the transparency of the process;
40. Welcomes the recommendation made by the Commission that screening reports, benchmarks for opening negotiation chapters and the final EU common position be made public;
41. Urges the Commission to provide a more precise definition of its 'reinforced Neighbourhood Policy' and to specify in detail what this type of relationship would involve;
42. Reiterates its previous call on the Commission and the Council to submit, for all European countries currently having no membership prospects, proposals for a close

bilateral or multilateral relationship with the EU that matches their specific needs and interests; emphasises that it is up to all countries with recognised membership prospects to decide whether they want to join this multilateral framework as an intermediate step towards full membership;

43. Calls in this context on the Commission and the Council to consider establishing, as part of a reinforced Neighbourhood Strategy, and in addition to the strategies concerning relations with other countries, an overall EU regional policy in the wider Black Sea area in order to build stronger bilateral or multilateral economic and political relations between the EU and all the countries of this area, particularly with regard to free trade, as is the case for the Central European Free Trade Agreement, investment, energy security and migration policy;
44. Is of the opinion that the above options, which entail a broad spectrum of operational possibilities, could constitute a real and attractive option which, without excluding full membership, would grant partner countries a stable long-term perspective of institutionalised relations with the EU and provide the incentive necessary to foster the internal reforms required in the countries in question;
45. Invites the Commission and the Council in this context to consider modulating Community assistance in the light of the progress made by beneficiary countries in achieving the reforms required for their European integration;
46. Emphasises that while Russia is neither a candidate for EU membership nor part of the European Neighbourhood Policy, relations with the EU's largest neighbour nevertheless remain vital in the context of any future EU enlargement strategy; urges that in this context the EU must continue all attempts to develop a unique, wide-ranging partnership with Russia, encompassing trade and energy, but above all human rights and democratisation issues;
47. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States, accession states and candidate states.