

Conclusions of the Brussels European Council: extract concerning enlargement (17 and 18 June 2004)

Caption: On 17 and 18 June 2004, the European Council recalls the Union's objective to welcome Bulgaria and Romania as Member States in January 2007, reaffirms the Union's commitment to the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey if, in December, it decides that the country fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria and recognises Croatia as an applicant country.

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**European Council (17 and 18 June 2004).
Presidency Conclusions – Brussels, 17 and 18 June 2004**

[...]

III. Enlargement

Bulgaria and Romania

22. The European Council underlines that Bulgaria and Romania are an integral part of the ongoing round of enlargement which saw ten new Member States join the Union on 1 May 2004. The Union recalls that the guiding principles which applied to the accession negotiations with the ten new Member States continue to apply to Bulgaria and Romania, which are part of the same inclusive and irreversible enlargement process.

23. The European Council welcomes the very substantial progress made by Bulgaria and Romania in the accession negotiations over the past months and reiterates the Union's common objective to welcome the two countries as members of the Union in January 2007, if they are ready.

24. In reaching agreement on a fair and equitable financial package for Bulgaria and Romania at the beginning of the year, the Union paved the way for concluding negotiations on the key financially-related chapters and the accession negotiations with the two countries thus entered a significant phase. Provided that real and effective progress in reforms and preparations on the ground for accession is maintained by Bulgaria and Romania, the Union confirms its determination to bring the accession negotiations to a successful conclusion for both countries in 2004, on the basis of own merits.

25. The Union notes with great satisfaction that all of the outstanding chapters in the negotiations with Bulgaria have been provisionally closed and that Romania has also made important progress and is substantially closer to achieving this goal. Member States and the Commission will continue to assist Romania in this regard. The European Council looks forward to the Commission 2004 Regular Report, which will assess the two countries' ability to assume all the obligations of membership by accession. With a view to signature of the Accession Treaty for Bulgaria and Romania as early as possible in 2005, drafting of the Accession Treaty for the two countries will begin in July 2004.

26. Being prepared to assume all the obligations of membership is crucial for Bulgaria and Romania. The Union therefore urges both countries to further intensify their efforts in order to be ready for membership in January 2007. The Union underlines that particular attention should be paid by Bulgaria and Romania to improving their administrative and judicial capacity, as well as to continuing economic and structural reform, and to the full and timely implementation of negotiated commitments. The Union will closely monitor preparations and implementation of commitments undertaken in all areas of the Acquis.

Turkey

27. The European Council welcomes the significant progress made to date by Turkey in the reform process, including the important and wide-ranging constitutional amendments adopted in May. It welcomes the continued and sustained efforts of the Turkish Government to meet the Copenhagen political criteria. In this context, the European Council emphasises the importance of concluding the remaining legislative work and of accelerating efforts to ensure decisive progress in the full and timely implementation of reforms at all levels of administration and throughout the country.

28. The European Union will continue to assist Turkey in its preparations and to work towards full implementation of the pre-accession strategy, in particular as regards strengthening the independence and functioning of the judiciary, the overall framework for the exercise of fundamental freedoms (association, expression and religion), cultural rights, the further alignment of civil-military relations with European practice and the situation in the southeast of the country.

29. The Union reaffirms its commitment that if the European Council decides in December 2004, on the

basis of a report and recommendation from the Commission, that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria, the EU will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay.

30. The European Council encourages the Turkish Government to remain firmly committed to macroeconomic and financial stabilisation, including full implementation of the structural reform agenda.

31. The European Council invites Turkey to conclude negotiations with the Commission on behalf of the Community and its 25 Member States on the adaptation of the Ankara Agreement to take account of the accession of the new Member States.

32. The European Council welcomes the positive contribution of the Turkish Government to the efforts of the UN Secretary-General to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

Croatia

33. The European Council welcomes the Commission Opinion on Croatia's application for EU membership and the recommendation that accession negotiations should be opened. The European Council considered the application on the basis of the Opinion and noted that Croatia meets the political criteria set by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 and the Stabilisation and Association Process conditionalities established by the Council in 1997. It decided that Croatia is a candidate country for membership and that the accession process should be launched.

34. The European Council decided to convene a bilateral intergovernmental conference with Croatia early in 2005 in order to begin negotiations. In advance of the negotiations, the Council will agree a general negotiating framework, taking full account of the experience of the fifth enlargement process. The European Council requests the Commission to present an evaluation in this regard, before the end of its mandate. It confirms that the negotiations will be based on Croatia's own merits and that the pace will depend solely on Croatia's progress in meeting the requirements for membership.

35. The European Council emphasises that Croatia needs to maintain full cooperation with ICTY and take all necessary steps to ensure that the remaining indictee is located and transferred to The Hague. Croatia also needs to make additional efforts on minority rights, refugee returns, reform of the judiciary, regional cooperation and the fight against corruption.

36. In order to prepare for negotiations, work should begin on an examination of the acquis, which might best be undertaken in the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Croatia.

37. The European Council requests the Commission to prepare a pre-accession strategy for Croatia, including the necessary financial instrument.

38. The European Council notes the Croatian decision not to apply to EU Member States any aspect of the Ecological and Fisheries Protection Zone. In this context, it welcomes the agreement reached by Italy, Slovenia and Croatia at the Trilateral meeting in Brussels on 4 June 2004.

Implications of Croatia's status for other countries of the Western Balkans

39. The European Council emphasises that the achievement of candidate status by Croatia should be an encouragement to the other countries of the Western Balkans to pursue their reforms. It reaffirms its commitment to the full implementation of the Thessaloniki agenda, which makes clear that the future of the Western Balkans rests within the European Union. The advance of the individual countries of the region towards European integration will proceed in parallel with the regional approach, which remains an essential element of EU policy. The European Council urges Croatia to continue to make a strong contribution to the development of closer regional cooperation.

40. The European Council adopted conclusions on the presidential election in Serbia as attached.

[...]