

European Parliament resolution on the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union (30 November 2006)

Caption: On 30 November 2006, the European Parliament adopts its final resolution on Bulgaria's accession to the European Union.

Source: European Parliament resolution on the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union. [ON-LINE]. [s.l.]: European Parliament, [10.01.2008]. A6-0420/2006. Disponible sur <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2006-0511+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

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European Parliament resolution on the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union (30 November 2006)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its assent of 13 April 2005 to the application by the Republic of Bulgaria to become a member of the European Union⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union⁽²⁾, signed on 25 April 2005 (the Accession Treaty),
- having regard to its many resolutions and reports on Bulgaria since the opening of accession negotiations,
- having regard to the Commission's regular reports on the state of preparedness of Bulgaria for accession and, in particular, its Communication of 26 September 2006 entitled "Monitoring report on the state of preparedness for EU membership of Bulgaria and Romania" (COM(2006)0549),
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A6-0420/2006),

A. whereas Parliament welcomes the confirmation from the Commission and the Council that Bulgaria is sufficiently prepared for EU membership on 1 January 2007,

B. whereas Bulgaria applied to join the European Union on 14 December 1995, was formally recognised as a candidate on 16 July 1997, opened negotiations on 15 February 2000, successfully concluded its accession negotiations on 14 December 2004, signed the Accession Treaty on 25 April 2005 and has ratified it, and, with Romania, will complete the historic fifth round of EU enlargement,

C. whereas the direction, speed and rhythm of reform have been consistent and the process of modernisation should be seen as beneficial in its own right and not merely as a prerequisite to accession to the EU,

D. whereas Bulgaria's enormous achievement during the transformation process deserves unqualified respect, principally for the people of Bulgaria who have borne with great patience an unparalleled series of drastic political and economic measures,

E. whereas, as in many other Member States, it is recognised that the reform process in Bulgaria will continue for many years after accession but there are areas of specific concern with a possibility of certain accompanying measures in order to encourage timely action,

F. whereas it is a matter for national governments, through the transitional arrangements in the Accession Treaty and other powers, to take decisions relating to migration issues such as restrictions on the freedom of movement for workers, recognising that this issue has become a matter of concern as a result of chaotic asylum and immigration policies unrelated to EU enlargement in a number of Member States,

1. Congratulates Bulgaria and welcomes its accession on 1 January 2007, looks forward to the arrival in due course of its 18 Members of the European Parliament as well as its Commissioner and officials in the EU institutions, and recognises the excellent contribution made by Bulgaria's observers in the European Parliament since September 2005;

2. Congratulates the Commission's Directorate-General for Enlargement on the very professional and dedicated manner in which it has conducted its monitoring work, particularly over the past year as progress towards accession has accelerated, and welcomes its balanced assessments of Bulgaria's preparations;

3. Welcomes the result of the Presidential elections on 29 October 2006; encourages the President to continue his pro-European course and the necessary reforms this course implies; deplores at the same time the strong showing of anti-European forces in the election and calls on the President to use his second term to address the fears of those Bulgarian citizens being critical about Bulgaria's accession to the EU;
4. Notes those areas that require further progress, the urgent and continuing need for the delivery of tangible results, and the various safeguards and other accompanying measures that are available, if necessary, to address continued shortcomings; calls on the Bulgarian authorities to act with urgency and thoroughness to obviate or minimise the requirement for such measures, insists on a continuing role for Parliament in monitoring developments and insists that the Commission continue fully to involve Parliament in monitoring developments and to associate Parliament fully in any consideration of activation of safeguard clauses, as the President of the Commission agreed to involve Parliament in the case of activation of the safeguard clause in Article 39 of the Act concerning the conditions of accession concerning the postponement of accession to 2008;
5. Urges speedy ratification of the Accession Treaty by the Member States that have yet to do so;

Political criteria

6. Insists on maximum transparency in every sector, including the handling of privatisation, tendering and public procurement processes, appointments and promotions in the public service and judiciary, and in the judicial process at all levels, in order to promote good governance, efficiency and public confidence;
7. Calls for a strengthening of the role of the Bulgarian Ombudsman in order to correct administrative mistakes and to act as an anti-corruption mechanism that could increase transparency within institutional practices;
8. Applauds the continuing efforts of the Bulgarian authorities to fulfil the commitments made in the area of justice and home affairs and the steps taken to combat organised crime and corruption and to complete the reform of the judiciary; expects measures such as more and better training for police investigators with regard to the pre-trial phase, better coordination of the anti-corruption strategy between the bodies involved and strengthening of the institutional competences of the inspectorates within the public administration to be implemented vigorously and to produce tangible and visible results, including successful indictments and convictions of those engaged in serious crimes;
9. Expects urgent and highly focused attention to address the benchmarks specified in the Commission's latest Monitoring Report in order to avoid any triggering of the safeguard mechanisms; calls for more effective action to identify, prosecute and confiscate the assets of those engaged in organised crime; and insists on tangible results in terms of enforcement and prosecution of cases of money laundering;
10. Welcomes the improvements in the organisation and management of the police and security services, with the implementation of the new Law on the Ministry of the Interior; calls for the expansion of the specialised police units engaged in the fight against organised crime, corruption - in particular at the borders -, drugs and people trafficking, and further calls for improvements in salaries and conditions of service, fast-track promotion for outstanding officers, and provision of state-of-the-art equipment; at the same time Member States are requested to offer specialised training and further secondment of police officers with special expertise to the Bulgarian police in order to assist in clearing the backlog of high-profile crimes and curtailing the activities of crime bosses;
11. Applauds the changes that have taken place in the prosecution service under the new Prosecutor-General, including fast-track procedures and steps to prevent the premature closure of investigations; calls for legal provisions to suspend magistrates who are under internal disciplinary investigation and for serious action to be taken against prosecutors who have obstructed justice or have closed cases for improper reasons;

12. Welcomes the decision to provide access to the files of the secret service, a measure that will help build public confidence and demonstrate a clear break with the past, and recommends that such disclosures be controlled by a non-partisan and respected commission;

13. Reiterates its call for upgrading of living and sanitary conditions in children's homes and homes for the mentally and physically disabled, recognising that existing projects and priorities do not sufficiently meet the needs of those in the institutions, and therefore calls for the problems of institutional care to become a national priority with higher quality and well thought-through de-institutionalisation programmes and cohesion funds targeted at achieving massive and visible improvements in buildings, living conditions and care; reiterates the call for the promotion of reforms in the legislation regarding adoption practices;

14. Recognises the many steps that have been taken to integrate the Roma and calls for even greater concerted efforts to improve their linguistic skills, to give them better access to higher education, vocational training and employment and to provide them with better healthcare and family planning, whilst encouraging them to do all that they can to adapt to the wider society and to take advantage of opportunities made available to them;

15. Calls on the Commission to closely monitor, prior to and after accession, the implementation of Bulgaria's commitments as regards the protection of minorities, and therefore to include this issue in the newly established cooperation and verification mechanism after accession;

Economic criteria

16. Congratulates Bulgaria on its continued economic improvement, which has delivered 6,1% GDP growth, higher real wages, falling unemployment (8,7%) and excellent foreign direct investment; and stresses the importance of prudent macro-economic policies and structural reforms in order to maintain stability and further reduce the trade and current account deficits, and to stimulate growth and employment;

17. Calls for intensified efforts to improve micro-economic conditions in Bulgaria to encourage the development of the private sector and especially of SMEs, based on transparent legal, administrative and regulatory structures and more flexible employment laws;

18. Expresses concern at continuing invisible barriers to foreign investors; insists that tendering and regulatory measures be transparent, impartial and easily understood; urges the Bulgarian Government to address failures to provide timely administrative decisions which may jeopardise the development of a positive investment climate in Bulgaria; recommends tax incentives to promote inward investment and improved communication and openness between officials and business;

Acquis communautaire

19. Congratulates the Bulgarian authorities on bringing close to completion a wide range of complex activities relating to agriculture; recognises the substantial progress that has been made in relation to the trade in live animals and animal welfare, where the highest standards must be respected, for example in the transportation and slaughter of animals and treatment of animal by-products; stresses the importance of the rendering system being fully operational upon accession and expects this to be the case; calls for finalisation of the required border inspection posts and vigorous action to control classical swine fever and other animal diseases, especially where there is any risk to public health or to the safety of food supplies;

20. Insists that Bulgaria seize the opportunity to introduce the highest standards of airport and aircraft security, given the nature of the terrorist threat where an attack on one country could be facilitated by weaknesses in security procedures in another; urges urgent and verifiable completion of all corrective actions to overcome deficiencies in the airworthiness and maintenance of aircraft, operating procedures and flight crew licensing;

21. Reiterates its calls on the Council and the Commission to ensure that Bulgaria fulfils its commitments under Article 30 of the Accession Treaty regarding the closure date for units 3 and 4 of the Kozloduy power plant, which has been ratified by the parliaments of the Member States; calls on the EU institutions to keep their promises regarding the funding of EUR 210 million to Bulgaria for the period 2007 to 2008 for the closure of the Kozloduy power plant;
 22. Stresses the importance of the proper management and control of EU funds, to ensure financial rectitude and to target them most effectively, applying procedures that are accessible and easily understood by those outside the bureaucracy;
 23. Points out that where temporary measures could be taken during the first three years after accession, similar measures were applied following the last accession round, to the benefit of all parties involved; expresses the wish that such mechanisms be applied only in specific areas; points out that appropriate measures to ensure the proper functioning of EU policies can be lifted only when the benchmarks, as set by the Commission, have been fully met;
 24. Congratulates Bulgaria on the contribution it has made to regional and international stability and security, in particular as a member of NATO, and sees its agreement with the USA for the use of military facilities as a tangible commitment to the transatlantic alliance;
 25. Expresses continued support for the Bulgarian nurses and Palestinian doctor, in custody in Libya since 1999; insists that the ongoing retrial be brought to a speedy and satisfactory conclusion and that the Libyan authorities then provide appropriate compensation for the misery that has been inflicted on these innocent people;
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26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Government and National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria.

(1) OJ C 33 E, 9.2.2006, p. 409.

(2) OJ L 157, 21.6.2005, p. 11.