

European Parliament resolution on Lithuania's application for membership of the European Union and the state of negotiations (5 September 2001)

Caption: On 5 September 2001, the European Parliament adopts a resolution on Lithuania's application for accession to the European Union and on the state of the accession negotiations.

Source: European Parliament resolution on Lithuania's application for membership of the European Union and the state of negotiations (COM(2000) 707 - C5-0607/2000 - 1997/2178(COS)). [ON-LINE]. [Strasbourg]: European Parliament, [20.05.2005]. A5-0253/2001. Disponible sur http://www3.europarl.eu.int/pv2/pv2?PRG=CALDOC&TPV=PROV&FILE=010905&TXTLST=1&POS=1&SDOCTA=10&Type_Doc=FIRST&LANGUE=EN.

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Publication date: 05/09/2012

European Parliament resolution on Lithuania's application for membership of the European Union and the state of negotiations (5 September 2001)

(COM(2000) 707 - C5-0607/2000 - 1997/2178(COS))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Lithuania's application for membership of the European Union, submitted on 8 December 1995, pursuant to Article 49 of the EU Treaty,
 - having regard to the 2000 Regular Report from the Commission on Lithuania's progress towards accession (COM(2000) 707 - C5-0607/2000),
 - having regard to the 2000 Enlargement Strategy Paper on progress towards accession by each of the candidate countries presented by the Commission (COM(2000) 700),
 - having regard to the decisions taken by the European Council, notably at Copenhagen (21 and 22 June 1993), Helsinki (10 and 11 December 1999), Nice (7-9 December 2000) and Gothenburg (15 and 16 June 2001),
 - having regard to the Accession Partnership for Lithuania concluded in 1999,
 - having regard to its resolution of 4 October 2000 on Lithuania's membership application to the European Union and the state of negotiations (COM(1999) 507 - C5-0030/2000 - 1997/2178(COS))⁽¹⁾,
 - 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 other committees concerned (A5-0253/2001),
- A. mindful of the absolute necessity to make a success of the EU enlargement process,
- B. convinced that this presupposes openness, frankness and respect for agreed rules and principles, on the part of the EU institutions and the Member States as well as on the part of the candidate countries,
- C. convinced, also, that when the most difficult final phase of the negotiations is entered into, all actors must refrain from making unreasonable demands; expecting that they let, instead, their actions show that their commitment to the project of mending the fractures that tragic developments in the past inflicted on our continent is beyond any doubt,
- D. whereas Parliament has made important contributions to the shaping of the principles and policies that are now guiding the enlargement process; whereas these principles and policies have proven their worth,
- E. whereas the principle of full differentiation within the negotiation process, according to which each country must be judged on its own merits, implies that a real chance to catch up must be given to those countries, including Lithuania, with which negotiations were not opened until last year,
- F. whereas Lithuania continues to make good progress in its preparations for EU membership,
- G. whereas this has allowed its negotiations to proceed at a steady pace, but a number of problems and weaknesses still call for stronger action,

Fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria

Political criteria

1. Recognises that Lithuania clearly satisfies the political criteria for EU membership; notes that ethnic minorities' rights are well protected; points out that there is nevertheless a need to improve the functioning of certain institutions and to guarantee more effectively that certain rights are always observed;
2. Encourages Lithuania to intensify its efforts to reform the police and conclude the reform of the judiciary; draws attention to the need to radically cut pre-trial detention periods and to ensure that detention is not used when not fully motivated; considers that measures to improve prison conditions should be a top priority;
3. Welcomes the recent appointments of an ombudsperson for equal opportunities and an ombudsperson for children; hopes that their activities will help to improve women's participation in the society, family life and upbringing and further strengthen respect for women's and children's rights;
4. Repeats its call for greater efforts to combat the phenomenon of trafficking in women for sexual exploitation from Lithuania to EU countries and elsewhere; notes that a national programme is now under preparation; considers this to be a responsibility also for the EU and the countries of destination; maintains the view that victims should be guaranteed protection, health care, and legal and psychological assistance;
5. Calls upon the Lithuanian Government to eliminate provisions in the penal code that discriminate against homosexual men and lesbian women notably Article 122, a provision that is declared contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights by the European Commission of Human Rights;
6. Notes that while corruption affecting the formation of laws, rules, regulations and decrees appears to be relatively low, administrative corruption is a problem; welcomes the resolution on Ethic Principles for State Politicians and Civil Servants by the Lithuanian Parliament and encourages Lithuania to step up the fight against corruption both by ensuring that competent authorities have adequate resources to detect and resolve cases and by striving to improve remuneration, increase training and strengthen professional ethics within the civil service;

Economic criteria

7. Supports the Commission's and the Association Council's conclusion that Lithuania is a functioning market economy and should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the medium term, provided that reforms continue;
8. Is encouraged by the ever stronger performance of the Lithuanian economy; notes the very positive trends in most macro-economic indicators, including exports, government deficit and current account balance; welcomes the fact that Lithuania has become a member of the World Trade Organisation;
9. Considers that an ever more solid basis for long-term growth is now emerging and that this radically strengthens the prospects for Lithuania's capacity both to address its great investment needs and to ensure increased prosperity for the whole of its population;
10. Welcomes the ratification of the European Social Charter by the Lithuanian Parliament; is concerned, however, about the increasing unemployment; notes that this phenomenon to a great extent is a result of structural change; is convinced that while having this immediate effect, structural change also leads to improved efficiency and greater competitiveness and that this should result in the creation of new jobs at an accelerating pace;
11. Believes that slowing down the economic reform process would in a longer term only exacerbate the unemployment problem; considers, however, that while sustaining its economic reform efforts, the state must also be fully committed to assisting the unemployed, improving the provision of retraining and of social protection, fighting poverty and safeguarding social cohesion, in accordance with the European social model; is aware of the tight constraints implied in the need not to put macro-economic stability at risk, but

encourages Lithuania to further develop its policies in these regards;

12. Notes the adoption of the Agriculture and Rural Development Plan and is convinced of the relevance of the many specific objectives and actions included therein; believes, however, that additional consideration could be given to the question how Lithuanian agriculture shall acquire its own profile and gain a competitive edge on the EU market;

13. Recommends that the regulatory framework and enforcement capacity governing land property, land tenancy and land use be improved, particularly as regards the forest privatisation process, so as not to jeopardise the safeguarding of the high natural values of the countryside, and to promote the use of natural resources in line with the principles of sustainability and the objectives of integrated rural development;

14. Believes that there is a pressing need to increase awareness at the local level and among individual farmers of challenges and opportunities now emerging; draws attention to the important role that farmers' organisations can play in this context; calls on the Commission to ensure that there will be no further delay in the launch of the Phare project specifically aimed at strengthening such organisations in candidate countries;

15. Notes, with regard to land reform, that the process of returning land has virtually been completed;

16. Notes Lithuania's intention to switch from the current US-dollar peg of its currency, the litas, to a euro-peg in the beginning of 2002;

Acquis criteria

17. Notes the detailed overview and assessment included in the Commission's 2000 Regular Report; notes, also, that Lithuania considers this report to be objective; recognises that Lithuania since its publication has made further progress in its alignment with the acquis, including in the areas of social policy, energy, and industry (promotion of competitiveness);

18. Considers that both candidate countries and Member States will need transition periods in certain areas;

19. Calls also for cross-sector social dialogue and the introduction of collective agreements, compliance with which is to be monitored by employees' representatives;

The Pre-Accession Strategy

20. Calls on Lithuania and the Commission to finalise the preparations for the launch of the Sapard programme for agriculture and rural development with all speed; is pleased that the Phare programme appears to operate well; notes that planning for ISPA projects continues;

21. Encourages the Lithuanian Government to speed up the identification of sites for and development of pilot agri-environment schemes under its national Rural Development Programme;

22. Notes with satisfaction the participation of Lithuania in a considerable number of Community programmes;

The negotiations and crucial issues in view of Parliament's assent to Lithuania's accession

23. Is convinced that the steady pace at which the membership negotiations are proceeding reflects the quality of Lithuania's membership preparations; is pleased to note that catch up is taking place; strongly hopes that Lithuania will be able to keep up its good record when it comes to honouring commitments made in the negotiations;

24. Welcomes and strongly supports the road map for the conclusion of the negotiations prepared by the

Commission and endorsed by the Nice European Council; notes with satisfaction that progress so far is in line with it;

25. Recommends Lithuania to pay particular attention to the energy and agricultural sectors, as well as to its administrative capacity in a number of areas, in its continued preparations for EU membership;

26. Encourages the participation of Lithuania in the Community's new Health Actionprogramme commencing 2000;

Other major issues and recommendations

27. Welcomes signs that Lithuania may take a decision on the closure date for unit 2 at the Ignalina nuclear power plant well before the end of 2004, which is the limit for this decision according to its National Energy Strategy; calls on the Lithuanian Government and Parliament to intensify preparations for the full closure of the Ignalina NPP in order to make possible the fulfilment of its commitments; calls on the Member States to enhance bilateral assistance in the framework of the international fund for the closure of INPP; asks for an increase of EU funds to help facilitate the closure of INPP;

28. Is aware that Lithuania will become more dependent on existing fossil fuel power plants, of which many are very polluting; considers that in order to limit the increase in this dependence, Lithuania should endeavour to exploit its great potential for energy savings; considers that taxing and pricing policies should be adapted to this objective;

29. Stresses the need for a national and regional comprehensive strategic plan for restructuring of the region around the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, based on an in-depth dialogue with the inhabitants of the region;

30. Encourages the European Investment Bank to study how investments to raise energy efficiency and produce energy in an environmentally friendly way can be further facilitated;

31. Believes that Lithuania may also be in a good position to promote alternative solutions, such as a more extensive biomass exploitation including biofuel production, the creation of new co-generation plants and the increase of gas use in the energy mix after undertaking the necessary feasibility studies, and that this might contribute in a limited, yet valuable way, to energy supply and also to rural development;

32. Considers that, because of the similarity between the challenges that EU candidate and non-candidate countries in the region face in certain areas, possibilities to develop regional cooperation in these areas should be examined;

33. Emphasises Lithuania's right to determine its own security policy independently and welcomes Lithuania's efforts to integrate across the range of Euro-Atlantic security structures as a step towards reducing the different security zones in Europe;

34. Points out that, following enlargement, Kaliningrad will become an enclave within the European Union with a considerably lower standard of living than adjoining areas; welcomes in that regard the fact that Russia has given Kaliningrad special economic status, which may mean the possibility of greater economic growth in the region; notes with satisfaction that Lithuania continues to play a constructive role in efforts to enhance cooperation with Russia in relation to the Kaliningrad oblast, but stresses that the EU's involvement in dialogue with Russia must be strengthened, particularly to ensure the possibility of free movement between Kaliningrad and Russia, and between Kaliningrad and adjoining EU countries, including within the framework of Schengen cooperation;

35. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments of the Member States and the Government and Parliament of Lithuania.

(1) OJ C 178, 22.6.2001, p. 135.

