

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

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

(COM(2000) 712 - C5-0612/2000 - 1997/2181(COS))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Slovenia's application for membership of the European Union, submitted on 10 June 1996, pursuant to Article 49 of the EU Treaty,
 - having regard to the 2000 Regular Report from the Commission on Slovenia's progress towards accession (COM(2000) 712 - C5-0612/2000),
 - 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), Luxembourg (12 and 13 December 1997), 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 Slovenia concluded in 1999,
 - having regard to its resolution of 4 October 2000 on Slovenia's application for membership of the European Union and the state of negotiations (COM(1999) 512 - C5-0035/2000 - 1997/2181(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 (A5-0260/2001),
- A. whereas the Slovene authorities have confirmed that Slovenia will be ready for accession on 1 January 2003 and that the *acquis* ought to have been fully incorporated within the first half of 2002,
- B. whereas, Slovenia would like to be able to take part in the 2004 elections to the European Parliament; whereas delayed accession could lead to public disaffection with Europe in Slovenia,
- C. bearing in mind that Slovenia is drafting constitutional amendments to align its institutional set-up with that of Europe that will enter into force when the country joins the European Union,
- D. noting that, according to the 2000 Regular Report from the Commission, Slovenia continues to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms fully, and that, since Slovenia has now ratified the major international conventions on constitutional rights, it can be said to be observing such rights to the full,
- E. whereas relations with all minorities in Slovenia's border areas have improved; noting in particular the cultural agreement with Austria, the improvement in relations with Italy following the promulgation of the law on the protection of Slovene minorities, the effective cooperation along the Italo-Slovene border, and the resolution of certain outstanding differences with Croatia, and wishing to see an effective initiative by the Slovene Government to resolve outstanding problems relating to property involving individual citizens, and social, religious and cultural organisations,
- F. whereas, having initially shied away from involvement in Balkan affairs, Slovenia is now working strenuously for stability in south-east Europe as part of international programmes and by dispatching armed personnel to destabilised areas,
- G. noting that Slovenia would be willing provide the European Union and the international community with

its own political and economic knowledge of the region and with the practical expertise that it has drawn from its past and is now bringing to bear,

H. stressing that Slovenia's macroeconomic climate is considered extremely healthy and that the 4-5% increase in GDP may yet be improved upon further,

I. aware that, at 7%, unemployment in Slovenia remains below the European average and that emigration trends are minimal,

J. bearing in mind Slovenia's wish to avoid any transitional period towards the free movement of persons,

K. observing that a range of laws and provisions has already been adopted on government, public agencies, administration, inspections and civil servants, the aim being to instil continuity into public service with permanent, politically impartial staff along the lines of the British civil service,

L. whereas Slovenia is the first of the candidate countries to have concluded negotiations on the complex and costly environment chapter; noting further that, contrary to expectations, the chapter on the free movement of capital has also been concluded, following a lively domestic debate stemming from the traditional fears of a small country vis-à-vis major wealthy economies,

M. whereas the survival of small owner-proprietor agrarian enterprises has been one of the vital bases for the preservation of biodiversity in many of the candidate countries,

N. noting Slovenia's preparations for entry into the Schengen system, to which end it is putting in place six checkpoints on the future external borders of the Union; welcoming the promising results achieved by the joint Italo-Slovene patrols operating along the border between the two countries, set up to curb the influx of illegal immigrants from third countries,

1. Welcomes the progress so far made by Slovenia in transposing chapters of the *acquis communautaire*;
2. Calls on the Slovene Government to speed up the privatisation of the leading banks in Ljubljana and Maribor and views the most recent developments as a useful step in this direction;
3. Calls on the Slovene Government to revitalise reform of the financial sector by encouraging competition, to speed up company restructuring and to increase manpower flexibility, so as to foster business development and improve market efficiency;
4. Calls on the Slovene authorities to inject transparency into the rules governing foreign investment flows, which, at less than USD 200 million, rank amongst the lowest in the applicant countries and are in large part the result of reinvestment from previous years;
5. Notes that the mere 73 purchase applications submitted between February 1999 and 10 March 2001 should serve to allay Slovenia's fears as regards the excessive influence of foreign capital in the property sector;
6. Hopes that all privatisation-related disputes, and above all those resulting from the transposition of the *acquis*, can be resolved; draws attention also to the fact that, upon accession, Slovenia will be required to comply with all European legislation;
7. Notes that the environment chapter has been provisionally closed with Slovenia and that three transitional periods have been negotiated, including one lasting up to 2015 for urban waste water treatment and another up to 2011 for integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC); calls for careful monitoring of progress with the involvement of all stakeholders, including environmental NGOs, on meeting the intermediate

targets that have been agreed, and of the implementing measures and financing arrangements that are envisaged;

8. Emphasises that EU animal welfare legislation must be properly supported by adequate controls at national and EU level if enlargement to include Slovenia is not to result in a deterioration in the EU's farm animal welfare record;
9. Believes it is of central importance that Slovenia monitors carefully the implementation of the new proposals in the Commission's White Paper on Food Safety, and that this is taken fully into account before the negotiations are finally completed;
10. Calls on Slovenia to put in place mechanisms necessary to link effectively to the Community's Rapid Alert System, both in terms of alerting the European Food Safety Authority of any serious perceived or identified risk and in terms of action to be taken by the RAS as a result of an EFSA warning;
11. Believes it would be useful to reach cross-party agreement on the division of Slovenia into regions and to this end calls on the government to find a solution, bearing in mind the importance of strengthening regional authorities' ability to implement the acquis, in particular in the environmental field, as well as their decisive role in the successful and sustainable management of the EU Structural Funds after accession;
12. Notes with satisfaction that Slovenia is well prepared for its accession to the European Union and is able to meet the requirements of the Community acquis in the transport sector without any transitional period - a large part of the legislative framework is already in place, and that framework will be completed by 2002;
13. Emphasises that, thanks to extensive investment in modernisation and to a transport policy geared to quality, cost-effectiveness, environmental protection and safety, the country's infrastructure has made substantial progress towards reaching Community level;
14. Calls on the Commission further to introduce measures and projects within the context of Corridor V aimed at the physical and socio-economic integration of the EU-Slovenia cross-border areas;
15. Calls for the outstanding laws in the road transport sector (road traffic act, road transport contracts and improvements in road transport safety) to be swiftly drawn up and actually implemented by 2002;
16. Emphasises that the legal framework for further tasks in the rail transport sector must be created, on the basis of the 1999 Railways Act, with particular regard to interoperability of high-speed and conventional trains; welcomes the modernisation of the section of Corridor V between Hungary and Slovenia and the closing of that gap in the railway network by 2002;
17. Expects air transport activities to be put on a new legal footing (Air Transport Act) at the earliest possible opportunity and urges the Slovene Government to modernise and strengthen its management structures;
18. Welcomes the very advanced state of alignment with EU legislation, with particular regard to safety issues, in the maritime transport sector, even though the adoption of the maritime code has been delayed;
19. Takes note of the strenuous efforts on the part of the Slovene authorities to reverse the considerable backlogs in public administration and the judiciary; welcomes the fact that, with 145 000 civil actions still outstanding, under the Hercules programme an ad hoc group of judges is to be sent to district courts with the largest backlog and that specialised staff have been hired in the various district courts; welcomes the computerisation of the land register, introduced with the cooperation of the World Bank;
20. Welcomes the final settlement of the dispute between Slovenia and Croatia concerning access for the port of Koper-Capodistria to international waters;

21. Welcomes the Slovene Government's blueprint for a National Development Plan designed to align the Phare, SAPARD and ISPA programmes and the status thereof;
22. Encourages the participation of Slovenia in the Community's new Health Action programme launched in 2000;
23. Welcomes the stated commitment of the Slovene Government to introduce legislation on mental health and calls on it to implement this as soon as possible;
24. Notes the progress achieved by Slovenia as far as the system of external and internal financial control is concerned, but calls on the Slovene authorities to ensure that the services responsible for internal audit and inspection are separated;
25. Urges Slovenia to set up a precise mechanism for the follow-up of internal audit reports;
26. Calls for swift transposition and alignment of legislation in the field of health and safety at work;
27. Welcomes the existing social dialogue, which, however, should be further developed at sectoral level;
28. Calls for the promotion of cross-border contact and cooperation between social partners in border regions so as to help disseminate EU social partnership models;
29. Calls on Slovenia, in view of experience with national employment plans in EU Member States in the context of the Luxembourg Process, to concentrate on similar initiatives; considers that a monitoring system therefore needs to be introduced, as a flanking measure, to improve information on the course and impact of industrial restructuring processes and thus counteract adverse effects on the labour market;
30. Calls for the integration of the principles of equal pay for work of equal value, equal treatment of women and men in employment, occupation and vocational training, and reconciliation of work and family life into the Slovene legal framework, including the introduction of a range of initiatives (public or private) which will in practice facilitate the integration of professional and family life, especially for families with children;
31. Notes that there are no surveys or statistics on this topic, but according to the experience of the SOS phone, violence is characteristic of every fifth family in Slovenia; calls on the Commission to encourage Slovenia's full participation in Community programmes which can strengthen gender equality and especially in the Programme relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005), as well as in the STOP and DAPHNE programmes to combat violence against women;
32. Notes that agricultural production in line with European food safety, veterinary, phytosanitary and quality standards is not possible, in every instance, when accession takes place; notes that the purpose of pre-accession aid must be to improve that situation; realises that, for a period following accession, internal trade may be restricted by these European demands;
33. Draws attention to the fact that the structures of holdings in the agricultural sector are still unfavourable, since 90% of agricultural land continues to be farmed by small private holdings, which accounts for the average farm size of only 4.8 ha; stresses, in this connection, the need to provide more support for cooperative structures there, so as to enable Slovenia to participate in the internal market successfully;
34. Welcomes the adoption of a law giving European Union citizens wishing to study in Slovenia the same rights as the country's own citizens;
35. Earnestly hopes that the Council will soon approve the proposals for decisions with a view to Slovenia's participation in the Culture 2000 and Media + programmes; recalls that the establishment of a "European Cultural Area" centred on respect for and encouragement of cultural and linguistic diversity and a common

shared heritage will contribute to the process of integration;

36. Calls on the Slovenian Government to adopt appropriate measures to prevent monopolies on the distribution of the printed media;

37. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments of the Member States and the government and parliament of Slovenia.

(1) OJ C 178, 22.6.2001, p.154.